THE ADVENT

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The Advent

Never forget that you are not alone. The Divine is with you helping and guiding you. He is the companion who never fails, the friend whose love comforts and strengthens. Have faith and He will do everything for you.

THE MOTHER

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The ADVENT

April 1952

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All he had done was to prepare a field;
For all that he had been must now new-shape
In him her joy to embody, to enshrine
Her beauty and greatness in his house of life....
Her light, her bliss he asked for earth and men.

Savitri, III. 2. SRI AUROBINDO

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

IDENTIFICATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

"THE PRAYERS"[1] speak always of the identification of consciousness with the Supreme. There is also the other identification of the consciousness, on the other side, namely, with things and beings, with the world outside: to that also the Prayers refer constantly. In reality, however, there is only one consciousness; it is everywhere, in all objects, in the universe and beyond. When a limit is put around it somewhere, a frame is erected, then it becomes or appears to become an individual consciousness. It is man's ego, a spot or point cutting and shutting itself off from the global consciousness, that has thus separated from the Divine; it is that ego, that separative consciousness which is asked to break the limits and regain its natural unity with the one consciousness. And when it can do so it is said to have made the identification with the Supreme. Apart from this, however, when the consciousness has separated and individualised itself in different centres, even then it exists and acts in hiding in all the multiple varieties

* Based on Mother's talks

[1] *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*

of forms, from the tiniest to the biggest. The same consciousness is aliv in the atom, the stone, the plant, the animal, in the earth and the sun an the stars, in the universe as a whole. Each object big or small, living non-living, conscious or unconscious, contains that consciousness at i centre and embodies or expresses it in various ways.

Consider, for example, your country, India. When you say "India what do you mean to convey? Is it the geographical boundary that goes b the name or the expanse of soil contained within that boundary or its hil and rivers, forests and fields or the beasts that range in it or its huma inhabitants or all of these together? No, it is something else; it is a centr of consciousness which has as its bodily frame the particular geographic boundary: it is that which dwells in its mountains and meadows, vibrat in its vegetation, lives and moves in its animal kingdom; and it is that whi is behind the mind and aspiration of its people, animating its culture an civilisation and moving it towards higher and higher illuminations an achievements. It is not India alone, but every country upon earth has i consciousness, which is the central core of its life and culture. Not only s even the earth itself, the earth as a whole, has a consciousness at its centr and is the embodiment of that consciousness: and earth's evolution mea the growth and expression of that consciousness. Likewise the sun too h a solar consciousness, a solar being presiding over its destiny. Furthe the universe too has a cosmic consciousness, one and indivisible, movi and guiding it. And still beyond there lies the transcendental consciousnes outside creation and manifestation.

Consciousness being one and the same everywhere fundamentally, yo own consciousness you can identify with the consciousness that inhabi any other particular formation, any object or being or world. You can, f example, identify your consciousness with that of a tree. Stroll out o evening, find a quiet place in the countryside; choose a big tree—a mang tree, for instance—and go and take your seat at its root, with your back resti or leaning against the trunk. Still yourself, be quiet and wait, see or fe what happens in you. You will feel as if some thing is rising up within yo from below upward, coursing like a fluid, something that makes you fe at once happy and contented and strong. It is the sap mounting in t tree with which you have come in contact, the vital force, the secret co sciousness in the tree that is comforting, restful and health-giving. We tired travellers sit under a banian tree, birds rest upon its spreading branche other animals—and even beings too (you must have heard of ghosts hauntin

a tree)—take shelter there. It is not merely for the cool or cosy shade, not merely for the physical convenience it gives, but the vital refuge or protection that it extends. Trees are so living, so sentient that they can be almost as friendly as an animal or even a human being. One feels at home, soothed, protected, strengthened under their overspreading foliage.

I will give you one instance. There was an old mango tree in one of our gardens—very old, leafless and dried up, decrepit and apparently dying. Everybody was for cutting it down and making the place clean and clear for flowers or vegetables. I looked at the tree. Suddenly I saw within the dry bark, at the core, a column of thin and dim light, a light greenish in colour, mounting up, something very living. I was one with the consciousness of the tree and it told me that I should not allow it to be cut down. The tree is still living and in a fairly good health. As a young girl barely in my teens I used to go into the woods not far from Paris (Bois de Fontainebleau): there were huge oak trees centuries old perhaps. And although I knew nothing of meditation then, I used to sit quietly by myself and feel the life around, the living presence of something in each tree that brought to me invariably the sense of health and happiness.

Another instance will show another kind of identification. It is an experience to which I have often referred. I was seated, drawn in and meditating. I felt that my physical body was dissolving or changing: it was becoming wider and wider, losing its human characters and taking gradually the shape of a globe. Arms, legs, head were no longer there: it became spherical, having exactly the form of the earth. I felt I had become the earth: I was the earth in form and substance and all terrestrial objects were in me, animals and people, living and moving in me, trees and plants and even inanimate objects as part of myself, limbs of my body: I was the earth-consciousness incarnate.

But the point is to be this individual consciousness anywhere or everywhere and still to maintain the higher, the universal and transcendent, the supreme consciousness, to be simultaneously conscious in both the modes to the utmost degree.

THE CENTRAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Very often this was the experience: union with the Supreme is established, but as soon as the consciousness was about to settle and merge in the bliss of the union, it was called back and had to turn to the outside world to the

ordinary affairs of ordinary consciousness. As if I was given to understand that it was not for me to forget and reject the life of the physical world and pass into the Beyond, but to maintain the contact, the closest contact, between this world and the Beyond and hold both together in one consciousness. The process is somewhat like this: you withdraw the consciousness from the world outside and turn inward; you withdraw even from your own physical activities and physical perceptions; you withdraw further in this way step by step through all the grades of life movements and mental movements, go deep inward and high upward till you reach the highest summit: the absolute silence and indivisible unity with the immutable single reality. This was the aim and, generally, the end of all the greatest spiritual disciplines of the past. We too have to possess this realisation; but for us, it is the basis, the indispensable basis, no doubt, all the same it is the starting-point. Sri Aurobindo has always said that our yoga begins where other yogas end. For what we aim at is not merely the attainment of the summit reality, the consciousness beyond, but to bring it down, make it a living and actual reality in the physical world. The older yogas intended to save the world, but accomplished only the salvation of the individual, one's own self, by passing beyond the world, realising the supreme Spirit and Truth and never coming back. Thus the world remained what it has ever been: only a few escaped out of it. Our yoga enters its crucial phase, its characteristic and its most difficult turn, when it seeks to bring down the highest consciousness once realised on the heights and make it enter into the life of the world and fix it there as the permanent possession of earthly life.

The key is to find the poise where both the extremes meet, the junction of the two levels of consciousness, the transcendent and the manifested, where the two not only do not contradict or oppose each other, but are aspects or modes of the same Truth, indissolubly united and unified. It is just the border-line, the last point of the manifested world and the first point of the Unmanifest (as one goes upward). If you are able to find the point you have not to make a choice between two irreconcilables, either the Brahman or the world. It is only when you miss the point that you are forced to the choice: some choose the other side of the border, the static consciousness, the eternal immutable pure being, self-absorbed and self-sufficient; others who dare not do that, turn to the world and remain entangled and drowned in its darkness, ignorance, travail, undelight, impotency and misery. But, as I have said, this is not the necessary or inevitable solution—if solution it is at all—of the enigma.

The first condition, however, to arrive at the crucial or synthetic state of consciousness (which is, in fact, the basic supramental consciousness, as Sri Aurobindo calls it) is the realisation that the world, that is to say, physical consciousness does not exist by itself. By itself, it is nothing. As the Prayer says, "it knows nothing, it can nothing, it is nothing." This realisation must not be merely a mental perception, a perception in the inner consciousness alone; but that the body, the physical existence itself must be conscious and in that consciousness see and experience the truth that by itself it is a void, non-existence: it becomes so however only to find that it is real, supremely real when it is suffused with its true substance, when it is the embodiment or vehicle of the supramental consciousness.

THE CONSTANTS OF THE SPIRIT

The Divine exists in three modes: (1) Existence, (2) Consciousness and (3) Bliss. Pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss—Sat-Chit-Ananda—these are the three fundamental elements out of which the world is made; they are everywhere in all things, in all beings, in all domains and levels of being. Sachchidananda is the supreme reality that is behind all, even here below, behind the mind, behind the life and behind the body too and behind each form in each of these domains. It is that which upholds and sustains everything. Therefore in order to realise it, it is not necessary to mount up, leaving behind the mental, the vital and physical existence and go beyond. Usually when one seeks Sachchidananda one looks for it outside the universe, above and beyond the creation, in the transcendent. In reality, however, one can meet it from any place where one happens to be, either in the mind or in the vital or even in the physical; one has only to withdraw and sink down, or get behind: it is there always. To meet Sachchidananda in and through the physical existence is not very much more difficult or rare a thing than the other ways; it is more difficult and rare to maintain it there constantly and consciously, to make of it a dynamic physical possession. That is the work to be done and for which Sri Aurobindo came.

SELFLESS WORKER

The Prayer says: "I look for my conscious mind and I find it no more"... Normally one is conscious of oneself. Whatever one does or whenever one does something, the consciousness always remains behind, "I am here, I

am doing". And if this sense of "I am" is not there, one can do nothing. All action stops automatically if I do not see or feel that I am acting. But that is the nature of ordinary consciousness; in the spiritual consciousness things are otherwise. Spiritual consciousness means the consciousness in which this sense of "I am doing" or even "I am" has disappeared, got dissolved. Truly, the work is done not by me, by the sense of "I-ness", but by Prakriti, Nature, apparently by Lower Nature, secretly by Higher Nature. When "I" disappears, the force that has been working continues to work, only the sense of "I" attached to it (in ignorance and by ignorance) is no longer there. Or, the "I" has completely merged itself into the working Force and is one with it. What is conscious is not the personality or the individual I, but the Force of action.

The difficulty is great and the darkness of the material consciousness is obstinate, but still if one knows how to persist or even how to wait, the Light comes.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE WORLD GAME

(ISHWARA-ISHWARI)

IN god-years yet unmeasured by a man's thought
or the earth's dance or moon's spin
I have guarded the law of the Invisible for the
sake of thy smile, O sweet;
In lives after innumerable winged lives, as of birds
crossing a wide sea,
I have watched on the path of the centuries for
the light of thy running feet.

The earth's dancing with the sun in his fire-robes was
but thou circling my flame-soul;
The gazing of the moon in its nectar-joy
but my look questing for thee through Space:
The world's haste and the racing of the tense mind
and the long gallop of fleet years
Were my speed to arrive through the flux of
things and to neighbour at last thy face.

The world's seekings are[1] mine and the immense scope
of the slow aeons my heart's way;
For I follow a secret and sublime Will in the
steps of thy Mother-might.
In the dim brute and the peering of man's brain[2] and
the calm sight in a god's eyes,
It is I who am searching for Thee in life, for thy
laughter and love and light.

[1] the earth's seeking is
[2] brow

When Time moved not nor yet Space was unrolled
wide, for thy game of the worlds I gave
Myself into thy delightful hands of power that
govern me and move and drive,
To earth's greenness I came for thy desires' sport, and thou
wovst subtly my spirit stuff
In a pattern of millions of shapes of souls and
thou mad'st with me each alive.

All things[1] only are a playfield of Thou-I and a
hued masque of the Two-One,
I am in Thee as art Thou in me, O Love; we are
closer than heart and breast;
I leaped forth from thee lit to the spirit's spark and
I mount back in the soul's fire;
By our motion the stars whorl in the swing of Time
and our oneness is Nature's rest.

When Light first from the unconscious Immense broke[2]
to create nebula and sun
'Twas the meeting of our hands through the empty
Night that enkindled the fateful blaze;
The huge systems abandoned their inert trance and
this green crater of life rose
That we might look on each other form on form
from the depths of a living gaze.

The mind waking in its ranges tier on tier with its
wide-eyed or its rapt thought
Was I labouring to know myself and Thee in
thy atoms and widths and depths,
And join knowing and together to meet fused with the
form form and in self self,
As a sea with a sea joins or limbs with limbs,
in my waking's delight and sleep's.

[1] The worlds
[2] leaped

But the mind raised shall melt touching its vast Above
and the man drown in the wide god,
And thy Truth shall descend in its golden flame,
and thy diamond whiteness blaze
And all here shall discover their joy core and find each other
in the near One,
And the sorrow of the heart shall turn to bliss and
thy sweetness possess earth's days.

Oh, Life yet shall be thy arms holding all clasped to thy
breast's rapture or calm peace;
For thy joy is the spirit's quenchless flame and
thy peace is its deathless base.[1]
My eyes looking in the love in thy deep eyes and our beings
felt close and one,
I shall know that the game was worth the while[2] whose
end is thy supreme[3] embrace.

SRI AUROBINDO

[1] brasier
[2] toil
[3] divine

Q. What is the meaning of: "to go beyond Sukha and Dukha and the three gunas" by which one is said to attain the Ananda state?

A: There is a consciousness in which nothing can sense the feeling of grief or pleasure—limited and active—as the result of the happenings of life or the touches of things; it is a still peace or a universal Ananda. That is the condition which is beyond the gunas.

Q: Does that Ananda state not have any touch or sense of the above? Or is it by knowing the truth of Life that one is freed of all bondages resulting from *sukha and dukha* and the gunas?

A: What is meant by the touch or sense of the above? The Ananda state is self-existent.

Q: What is essential for a Yogi to be free from the "dwandwas"? If there are no *alternations* by the action of the dwandwas, will not the world become devoid of *Rasa*, like *jada*, not at all conscious of the Will of Bhagavan and inevitably ending in a state *quite* contrary to the Will of the Bhagavan?

A: People do not become conscious of the will of the Divine by being slaves to the dualities—one becomes conscious of the Will by opening oneself to the Divine consciousness and the Divine consciousness is not subject to the dualities. The rasa you speak of is not of the pleasure and pain of the ignorant vital being. The Divine is not a vital Being but Anandamaya.

15.3.1937

* * *

Q: What is the meaning of seeing everything as the Lord? Is it that all will appear to the senses as Jyoti? Or is it an experience by which we realise that all is a Lila conducted by an Invisible Subtle Shakti with the help of Panchabhuta and Jeevashakti in the midst of Time, Space and Causation? Or is it an experience by which one realises that all comes out of the Lord by His Will and disappears again into Him by the same Will?

A: Seeing means entering into a consciousness that would be spiritual in which one is aware of a single Being, Self, Existence everywhere, Infinite and Eternal, in all and containing all and constituting all. This is the fundamental realisation—the rest are aspects of that one same Being and relations of the Divine with the Universe.

* * *

One can either use efforts and then one must be patient and persevering, or one can rely on the Divine with a constant call and aspiration. But then the reliance has to be a true one, not insisting on immediate fruit.

All that is the physical mind refusing to take the trouble of the labour and struggle necessary for the spiritual achievement. It wants to get the highest, but desires a smooth course all the way. 'Who the devil is going to face so much trouble for getting the Divine'?—that is the underlying feeling. The difficulty with the thoughts is a difficulty every Yogi has gone through—so is the phenomenon of a little result after some days of effort. It is only when one has cleared the field and ploughed and sown and watched over it that a big harvest can be hoped for. The other is a constant effort to get things down and pull down what one wants. Acceptance and rejection are quite a different thing.

* * *

The reason why there are these alternations of which you complain is that the nature of the consciousness is like that; after a little spell of wakefulness it feels the need of a little sleep. Very often in the beginning the wakings are brief, the sleeps long; afterwards it becomes more equal and later on the sleep periods are shorter and shorter. Another cause of these alternations, when one is receiving, is the nature's need of closing up to assimilate. It can take perhaps a great deal, but while the experience is going on it cannot absorb properly what it brings, so it closes down for assimilation. A third cause comes in in the period of transformation,—one part of the nature changes and one feels for a time as if there had been a complete and permanent change. But one is disappointed to find it cease and a period of barrenness or lowered consciousness follow. This is because another part of the consciousness comes up for change and a period of preparation and veiled working follows which seems to be one of unen-

lightenment or worse. These things alarm, disappoint or perplex the eagerness and impatience of the sadhak; but if one takes them quietly and knows how to use them or adopt the right attitude, one can make these unenlightened periods also a part of the conscious sadhana. So the Vedic Rishis speak of the alternation of "Day and Night both suckling the divine Child." What you feel in the head is probably the first conscious descent into the body of the divine Force from above. Up to now it must have been working unfelt by you from behind the heart. If the concentration takes place naturally in the head you must allow it to do so, but the possibility of this has been prepared by the previous concentration in the heart, so that also need not be discontinued unless the force working in you insists on the upper concentration only. Aspiration can be continued in the same way until the conduct of the Sadhana by the Mother's power is clearly felt and becomes to you the normal thing.

15.9.1934

* * *

The illusionist metaphors all fail when you drive them home—they are themselves an illusion. Identification with the body is an error, not an illusion. We are not the body but the body is still something of ourselves. With realisation the erroneous identification ceases—in certain experiences the existence of the body is not felt at all. In the full realisation the body is within us, not we in it, it is an instrumental formation in our wider being —our consciousness exceeds but also pervades it, it can be dissolved without our ceasing to be the self. That is about all.

Yes, psychologists of course having to deal with mental movements more easily recognise that there can be no real equation between them and physiological processes and at the most mind and body react on each other as is inevitable since they are lodging together. But even a great physical scientist like Huxley recognised that mind was something quite different from matter and could not possibly be explained in the terms of matter. Only since then physical science became very arrogant and bumptious and tried to subject everything to itself and its processes. Now in theory it has begun to recognise its limitations in a general way, but the old mentality is still too habitual in most scientists to shake off yet.

16.12.1935

BHAGAVAD-GITA*

(*A Translation*)

CHAPTER II

TO him thus besieged with pity and his eyes full bewildered with crowding tears, to him weak with sorrow, Madhusudan spake this word.

KRISHNA

"Whence hath this stain of darkness come upon thee in the very crisis and the stress, O Urjoona, this weakness unheavenly, inglorious, beloved of un-Aryan minds? Fall not into coward impotence, O Partha; not on thee does that sit well; fling from thee the miserable weakness of thy heart, O scourge of thy foes."

URJOONA

"How shall I combat Bheesma in the fight and Drona, O Madhusudan, how shall I smite with arrows those venerable heads? Better were it, not piercing these great and worshipped hearts to eat even a beggar's bread on this our earth. I slay our earthly wealth and bliss when I slay these; blood-stained will be the joys I shall taste. Therefore we know not which of these is better, that we should be victors or that we should be vanquished: for they whom slaying we should have no heart to live, lo, they Dhritarashtrians face us in the foeman's van. Pain and unwillingness have swept me from my natural self, my heart is bewildered as to right and wrong: thee then I question. Tell me what would surely be my goood, for I am thy disciple; teach me, for in thee I have sought my refuge. I see not what shall banish from me the grief that parcheth up the senses, though I win on earth rich kingship without rival and empire over the very gods in heaven."

Thus Gudakésha to Hrishikésha; the scourger of his foes said unto Govinda, "I will not fight" and ceased from words. On him thus overcome

* From old writings

with weakness in the midmost of either battle,

Krishna smiled a little and said:

"Thou grievest for whom thou shouldst not grieve and yet speakest wise-seeming words, but the wise grieve not, whether for the dead or for the living. It is not that I was not before, nor thou nor these lords of the folk, nor yet that we shall not be again hereafter. Even as the embodied spirit passes in this body to boyhood and youth and age, so also it passes away from this body to another; the strong man suffers not his soul to be clouded by this. But the things of material touch, O son of Coonty, which bring cold and warmth, pleasure and pain, they come and they pass; transient are they, these seek to abandon, O Bharata. The man whom these vex not, O lion of men, who is strong and receiveth sorrow and bliss as one, that man is ready for immortality. For that which is not there is no coming into being, and for that which is there is no ceasing to be; yea of both of these the lookers into truth have seen an end. But That in which all this universe is extended, know to be imperishable; none hath force to bring to nought the One who decays not neither passes away. Finite and transient are these bodies called, of the eternal, imperishable and immeasurable embodied Spirit; arise, therefore, and fight, O son of Bharata. Who knoweth the Spirit as slayer and who deemeth Him to be slain, both of these discern not. He slayeth not, neither is he slain. He is not born nor dieth ever, nor having once been shall not be again. He is unborn, for ever and perpetual. He is the Ancient One who is not slain with the slaying of the body. He who knoweth Him to be imperishable, eternal, unborn and undecaying, whom doth that man, O Partha, slay or cause to be slain? As a man casteth from him his worn-out robes and taketh to him other and new raiment, so the embodied Spirit casteth away its worn-out bodies and goeth to other and new casings. Him the sword cleaveth not, Him the fire cannot burn, Him the water wetteth not and the hot wind withereth not away; indivisible, unconsumable, unmergible, unwitherable is He. He is for ever and everywhere, constant and moveth not, He is the One Sempiternal Being. If thou knowest him as such, thou hast no cause to grieve.

And now if yet thou deemest of the Spirit as everborn or everdying, even so thou hast no cause to grieve for him, O strong-armed. For of that which is born the death is certain, and of that which is dead, the birth is sure; therefore in a thing inevitable thou oughtest not to grieve. Unmanifested in their beginning are creatures, manifested in the middle, O Bharata; they become but unmanifest again at death; what room is here for lamentation? As a

Mystery one seeth Him, as a Mystery another speaketh of Him, as a Mystery a third heareth of Him, but even with revelation not one knoweth Him. The embodied One is for ever unslayable in the body of every man, O Bharata; and from Him are all creatures; therefore thou hast no cause for grief. Moreover if thou considerest the law of thy own being, thou oughtest not to tremble, for than battling in a just cause the Kshatriya knoweth no greater bliss. Happy are the Kshatriyas, O Partha, who win such a battle to their portion; it is as though one came past by chance and found the door of Paradise open. Now if thou wilt not wage this just and righteous battle, then hast thou cast from thee thy glory and the law of thy being, and brought sin upon thy head; yea, thy shame shall be eternal in the mouth of all creatures; and for one who hath been honoured, shame is worse than death. The warriors will think that from fear thou hast ceased from battle, and in their eyes who thought highly of thee, thou shalt be belittled. And thine ill-wishers will speak of thee many unutterable words, disparaging thy might and thy greatness, than which there is no worse bitterness under heaven. Slain thou shalt conquer heaven, victorious thou shalt enjoy earth for thy kingdom; therefore arise, O son of Coonty, arise with a heart resolute for war. Make thou thy soul indifferent to pain and pleasure, to gain and loss, to defeat and victory, then gird thyself to the combat; sin shall not touch thee then.

Thus hath been declared to thee the mind that dwelleth in the way of Sankhya; hearken now to that which dwelleth in Yoga, to which being wedded, thou shalt cast from thee, O Partha, action's binding chain. On this path no step once taken is lost, in this path thou shalt meet with no stumbling-block; even a little of this Law saveth the heart from its great fear. One is the mind of a man that holds fast to its aim, but infinite are their minds, and many-branching, who have no resolved goal. 'Tis a flowery word they babble, men of little understanding who take delight in the creed of Veda, disputing, saying "There is nought else", their souls full of desires, their hopes bent upon Heaven; but he who hearkeneth to their words that give but the fruit of life's actions, and is crowded with multifold rituals aiming only at splendour and enjoyment and lordship,—lo, it hurrieth away his heart and causeth it to cling to lordship and pleasures, and his mind is unfixed to God and cannot set itself on the rock of concentration. Of the three nature-moods are the stuff of the Vedas, but thou, O Urjoona, rise above the three, high beyond the dualities, steadfast on the plane of the Light, be careless of getting and having, be a man with a soul. As much use as there is in a well, when all the regions are flowing with water, so much is there in

all the Vedas to the Brahman who hath the Knowledge. Thou hast right to action only, to the fruit of action thou hast no manner of right at all; be not motived by the fruits of action, neither to inaction sell thy soul; but put attachment far from thee, O Dhununjoy, and do thy deeds with a mind awaiting success and failure with an equal heart, for 'tis such equipoise of the soul they call Yoga indeed. For far lower is action than yoga of the Supermind; in the Supermind seek thy refuge, for this is a mean and pitiful thing that a man should work for success and rewards. The man whose Supermind is in Yoga casteth from him even in this world both righteousness and sin; therefore to Yoga gird thy soul; when thou dost works Yoga is the one auspicious way. For the wise whose understandings have reached God, cast from them the fruit that is born of their deeds, they are delivered from the fetters of birth, they pass into that sphere where suffering is not, neither any disease. When thy soul shall have voyaged to the other shore over the Chorus (?) of the Great Bewilderment, then shalt thou become careless of the Scripture that is and the Scripture that shalt be, and when the mind that is perplexed and beaten about by the Scripture shall stand fast and motionless in Samadhi, then shalt thou attain Yoga."

URJOONA

"What is the speech of him in whom Wisdom hath taken its firm seat, O Keshava, of him who is in Samadhi, whose thought standeth on settled understanding? What speaketh he, what are his sittings and what his goings?"

KRISHNA

"When a man casteth far away from him, O son of Pritha, all the desires that cling to the mind, when he is self-content in the Self, then it is said of him that his Reason is fixed in its seat. He whose soul is not shaken in sorrows and in happinesses, hungers not after their delight, he to whom fear and liking and wrath are forgotten things, he is the sage thought in whom is settled. He who is in all things without affections, whether evil come to him or whether good, who delights not in the pleasure neither hateth the pain, he is the man of an established understanding. As the tortoise gathereth in its limbs from all sides, so when this understanding spirit gathereth in the senses away from the things in which the senses work, then is the Reason in a man safely seated. By fasting and refraining the objects of passion

cease from a man, but the desire and the delight in them remain; but when the embodied spirit hath beheld the most High, the very desire and delight cease and are no more. For very furious and turbulent are the senses, O son of Coonty, and though a man be God-seeking, though he have the soul that discerneth, they seize upon even his mind and ravish it violently away. Let a man devoted to me coerce all these and sit fast in Yoga utterly giving himself up to Me, for only when a man has his senses in his grip is the Reason of him firm in its seat. But when a man thinketh much and often of the things of sense, fondness for them groweth upon him, and from fondness desire and passion are born; and passion's child is wrath; out of wrath cometh delusion and disturbance of the brain; and from delusion cometh confusion of the recording mind; and when memory faileth the overmind is destroyed, and by the ruin of the overmind the soul goeth to its perdition. When one moveth over the fields of the passions with his senses in the grip of the Self, delivered from likings and dislikings, and when the Spirit itself answers to the helm, a pure serenity becometh his. In that bright gladness of the soul there cometh to him a waning away of all grief; for when a man's heart is like a calm and pure sky the Thought in him findeth very quickly its firm foundation. Who hath not yoga hath not understanding, who hath not yoga hath not infinite and inward contemplation, who thinketh not infinitely and inwardly hath not peace of soul, and how shall he be happy whose soul is not at peace? For the mind that followeth the control and working of the senses when they range abroad hurleth along with it the Thought in the Spirit as the wind hurleth along a ship upon the waters. Therefore it is, O strong-armed, that his Reason is firmly based whose senses are reined in on all sides from the things of their desire.

In the night which is darkness to all creatures, the governed soul is awake and liveth; that in which all creatures wake and live, is night to the eyes of the seer. The waters enter into the vast, full and unmoving ocean, and the ocean stirs not nor is troubled, and he into whom all desires even in such wise enter attaineth unto peace, and not the lover of passion. That man who casteth away all desires and doeth works without craving, not melting to aught because it is his, not seeing in aught his separate self, attaineth his soul's peace. This is that God-state, O son of Pritha, to which attaining man is not again bewildered, but standing fast in it even in the hour of his ending mounteth to Cessation in the Eternal."

SRI AUROBINDO

PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS*

III

PARABRAHMAN

SO far the great Transcendent Reality has been viewed from the standpoint of the human spirit as it travels on the upward curve of evolution to culminate in the Supreme. It will now be more convenient to view the Absolute from the other end of the cycle of manifestation where, in a sense, evolution begins and the great Cause of phenomena stands with His face towards the Universe He will soon create. At first of course there is the Absolute, unconditioned, unmanifested, unimaginable, of Whom nothing can be predicated except negatives. But as the first step towards manifestation the Absolute—produces, shall we say? let the word serve for want of a better!—produces in Itself a luminous Shadow of Its infinite inconceivable Being,—the image is trivial and absurd, but one can find none adequate,—which is Parabrahman or if we like so to call Him, God, the Eternal, the Supreme Spirit, the Seer, Witness, Wisdom, Source, Creator, Ancient of Days. Of Him Vedanta itself can only speak in two great trilogies, subjective and objective, *Saccidānandam*, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss; *Satyam, Jñānam, Anantam*, Truth, Knowledge, Infinity.

Saccidānaudam. The Supreme is Pure Being, Absolute Existence, *Sat.* He Existence because He alone *Is*, there being nothing else which has any ultimate reality or any being independent of His self-manifestation. And He is *Absolute* Existence because since He alone is and nothing else exists in reality, He must necessarily exist by Himself, in Himself and to Himself. There can be no cause for His existence, nor object to His existence; nor can there be any increase or diminution in Him, since increase can only come by addition from something external and diminution by loss to something external, and there is nothing external to Brahman. He cannot change,

* From old writings

in any way, for then He would be subject to Time and Causality; nor have parts, for then He would be subject to the law of Space. He is beyond the conceptions of Space, Time and Causality which He creates phenomenally as the conditions of manifestation but which cannot condition their Source. Parabrahman, then, is Absolute Existence.

The Supreme is also Pure Awareness, Absolute Consciousness, *Chit*. We must be on our guard against confusing the ultimate consciousness of Brahman with our own modes of thought and knowledge, or calling Him in any but avowedly metaphorical language the Universal Omniscient Mind and by such other terminology; Mind, Thought, Knowledge, Omniscience, Partial Science, Nescience are merely modes in which Consciousness figures under various conditions and in various receptacles. But the Pure Consciousness of the Brahman is a conception which transcends our modes of thinking. Philosophy has done well to point out that consciousness is in its essence purely subjective. We are not conscious of external objects; we are only conscious of certain perceptions and impressions in our brains which by the separate or concurrent operation of our senses we are able to externalise into name and form; and in the very nature of things and to the end of Time we cannot be conscious of anything except these impressions and perceptions. The fact is indubitable, though Materialism and Idealism explain it in diametrically opposite directions. We shall eventually know that this condition is imperative precisely because consciousness *is* the fundamental thing from which all phenomenal existence proceeds, so much so that all phenomena have been called by a bold metaphor distortions or corruptions (*vikaras*) of the absolute consciousness. Monistic philosophers tell us however that the true explanation is not corruption but illation, (*adhyaropa*) first of the idea of not-self into the Self, and of externality into the internal, and then of fresh and ever more complex forms by the method of Evolution. These metaphysical explanations it is necessary indeed to grasp, but even when we have mastered their delicate distinctions, refined upon refinement and brought ourselves to the verge of infinite ideas, there at least we must pause; we are moored to our brains and cannot in this body cut the rope in order to spread our sails over the illimitable ocean. It is enough if we satisfy ourselves with some dim realisation of the fact that all sentience is ultimately self-sentience.

The Upanishads tell us that Brahman is not a blind universal Force working by its very nature mechanically, nor even an unconscious Cause of Force; He is conscious or rather is Himself Consciousness *Chit* as well as

Sat. It necessarily follows that *Sat* and *Chit* are really the same; Existence is Consciousness and cannot be separated from Consciousness. Phenomenally we may choose to regard existence as proceeding from sentience or culminating in it or being in and by it; but culmination is only a return to a concealed source, an efflorescence already concealed in the seed. So that from all these three standpoints sentience is eventually the condition of existence; they are only three different aspects of the mental necessity which forbids us to imagine the great *Is* as essentially unaware that He *Is*. We may of course choose to believe that things are the other way about, that existence proceeds from insentience through sentience back again to insentience; Sentience is then merely a form of insentience, a delusion or temporary corruption (*vikara*) of the eternal and insentient. In this case Sentience, Intelligence, Mind, Thought and Knowledge, all are Maya and either insentient Matter or Nothingness the only eternal reality. But the Nihilist's negation of existence is a mere *reductio ad absurdum* of all thought and reason, a metaphysical *harakiri* by which Philosophy rips up her own bowels with her own weapons. The Materialist's conclusion of eternal insentient Matter seems to stand on firmer ground; for we have certainly the observed fact that evolution seems to start from inanimate matter, and consciousness presents itself in matter as a thing that appears for a short time only to disappear, a phenomenon or temporary seeming. To this argument also Vedanta can marshal a battallion of replies. The assertion of eternally insentient Matter (*Prakriti*) without any permanently sentient reality (*Purusha*) is, to begin with, a paradox far more startling than the onistic paradox of Maya and lands us in a conclusion mentally inconceivable. Nor is the materialistic conclusion indisputably proved by observed facts; rather facts seem to lead us to a quite different conclusion, since the existence of anything really insentient behind which there is no concealed Sentience is an assumption (for we cannot even positively say that inanimate things are absolutely inanimate), and the one fact we surely and indisputably know is our own sentience and animation. In the workings of inanimate Matter we everywhere see the operations of Intelligence operating by means and adapting means to an end and the intelligent use of means by an unconscious entity is a thing paradoxical in itself and unsupported by an atom of proof; indeed the wider knowledge of the Universe attainable to Yoga actually does reveal such a Universal Intelligence everywhere at work.

Brahman, then, is Consciousness, and this once conceded, it follows that He must be in His transcendental reality Absolute Consciousness. His

Consciousness is from itself and of itself like His existence, because there is nothing separate and other than Him; not only so but it does not consist in the knowledge of one part of Himself by another, or of His parts by His whole, since His transcendental existence is one and simple, without parts. His consciousness therefore does not proceed by the same laws as our consciousness, does not proceed by differentiating subject from object, knower from known, but simply *is*, by its own right of pure and unqualified existence, eternally and illimitably, in a way impure and qualified existences cannot conceive.

The Supreme is, finally, Pure Ecstasy, Absolute Bliss, *Ananda*. Now just as *Sat* and *Chit* are the same, so are *Sat* and *Chit* not different from *Ananda*; just as Existence is Consciousness and cannot be separated from Consciousness, so Conscious Existence is Bliss and cannot be separated from Bliss. I think we feel this even in the very finite existence and cramped consciousness of life on the material plane. Conscious existence at least cannot endure without pleasure; even in the most miserable sentient being there must be pleasure in existence though it appear small as a grain of mustard seed; blank absolute misery entails suicide and annihilation as its necessary and immediate consequence. The will to live,—the desire of conscious existence and the instinct of self-preservation, is no mere teleological arrangement of Nature with a particular end before it, but is fundamental and independent of end or object; it is merely a body and form to that pleasure of existence which is essential and eternal; and it cannot be forced to give way to anything but that will to live *more* fully and widely which is the source of one side of all personal ambition and aspiration, on the other of all love, self-sacrifice and self-conquest. Even suicide is merely a frenzied revolt against limitation, a revolt not the less significant because it is without knowledge. The pleasure of existence can consent to merge only in the greater pleasure of a widened existence, and religion, the aspiration towards God, is simply the fulfilment of this eternal elemental force, its desire to merge its separate and limited joy in the sheer bliss of infinite existence. The Will to live individually embodies the pleasure of individual existence which is the outer phenomenal self of all creatures; but the will to live infinitely can only proceed straight from the transcendent, ultimate Spirit in us which is our real Self; and it is this that availeth towards immortality. Brahman, then, being infinity of conscious existence, is also infinite bliss and the bliss of Brahman is necessarily absolute both in its nature and as to its object. Any mixture or coexistence with pain would

imply a cause of pain either the same or other than the cause of bliss, and with the immediate admission of division, struggle, opposition, of something inharmonious and self-annulling in Brahman; but division and opposition which depend upon relation cannot exist in the unrelated Absolute. Pain is, properly considered, the result of limitation. When the desires and impulses are limited in their satisfaction or the matter, physical or mental, on which they act is checked, pressed inward, divided or pulled apart by some thing alien to itself, then only can pain arise. Where there is no limitation, there can be no pain. The Bliss of Brahman is therefore absolute in its nature.

It is no less absolute with regard to its object; for the subject and object are the same. It is inherent in His own existence and consciousness and cannot possibly have any cause within or without Him who alone Is and Is without parts or division. Some would have us believe that a self-existent bliss is impossible; but bliss, like pain, needs an object or cause different from the subject and therefore depends on limitation. Yet even in this material or waking world any considerable and deep experience will show us that there is a pleasure which is independent of surroundings and does not rely for its sustenance on temporary or external objects. The pleasure that depends on others is turbid, precarious and marred by the certainty of diminution and loss; it is only as one withdraws deeper and deeper into oneself that one comes nearer and nearer to the peace that passeth understanding. An equally significant fact is to be found in the phenomena of satiety; of which this is the governing law that the less limited and the more subjective the field of pleasure, the farther is it removed from the reach of satiety and disgust. The body is rapidly sated with pleasure; the emotions, less limited and more subjective, can take in a much deeper draught of joy; the mind, still wider and more capable of internality, has a yet profounder gulf and untiring faculty of assimilation; the pleasures of the intellect and higher understanding, where we move in a very rare and wide atmosphere, seldom pall and, even then, soon repair themselves; while the infinite spirit, the acme of our subjectiveness, knows not any disgust of spiritual ecstasy and will be content with nothing short of infinity in its bliss. The logical culmination of this ascending series is the transcendent and absolute Parabrahman whose bliss is endless, self-existent and pure.

This then is the Trinity of the Upanishads, Absolute Existence; which is *therefore* Absolute Consciousness; which is therefore Absolute Bliss.

And then the second Trinity *Satyam Jñānam Anantam*. This Trinity is not different from the first but merely its objective expression. Brahman

is *Satyam*, Truth or Reality because Truth or Reality is merely the subjective idea of existence viewed objectively. Only that which fundamentally exists is real and true, and Brahman being absolute existence is also absolute truth and reality. All other things are only relatively real, not indeed false in every sense since they are appearances of a Reality, but impermanent and therefore not in themselves ultimately true.

Brahman is also *Jñānam*, Knowledge; for Knowledge is merely the subjective idea of consciousness viewed objectively. The word *Jñāna* as a philosophic term has an especial connotation. It is distinguished from *samjñāna* which is awareness by contact; from *ājñāna* which is perception by receptive and central Will and implies a command from the brain; from *prajñāna* which is Wisdom, teleological will or knowledge with a purpose; and from *vijñāna* or knowledge by discrimination. *Jñāna* is knowledge direct and without the use of a medium. Brahman is absolute *Jñāna*, direct and self-existent, without beginning, middle or end, in which the Knower is also the Knowledge and the Known.

Finally, Brahman is *Anantam*, Endlessness, including all kinds of Infinity. His Infinity is of course involved in His absolute existence and consciousness; but it arises directly from His absolute bliss, since bliss as we have seen, consists objectively in the absence of limitation. Infinity therefore is merely the subjective idea of bliss viewed objectively. It may be otherwise expressed by the word Freedom or by the word Immortality. All phenomenal things are bound by laws and limitations imposed by the triple idea of Time, Space and Causality; in Brahman alone there is absolute Freedom, for He has no beginning, middle or end in Time or Space nor, being immutable in Causality. Regarded from the point of view of Time, Brahman is Eternity or Immortality; regarded from the point of view of Space He is Infinity or Universality, regarded from the point of view of Causality He is absolute Freedom. In one word He is *Anantam*, Endlessness, absence of Limitation.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE DIVINE COLLABORATORS

PART II

WE have proposed to ourselves, first, a consideration of the essential identity between the Mother's conception of the divine Union as enunciated by her *before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo* and that of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's conception, evolved out of the all-embracing integrality of his realisation, is a global synthesis of all the concepts of the past crowned with his distinctive gospel of the constant, dynamic union and communion with the Divine in the physical being of man. This original contribution of his to the ideal of the divine Union opens up an infinite vista of spiritual perfection and explains and justifies the soul's descent into human birth.

"These three elements, a union with the supreme Divine, unity with the universal Self, and a supramental life action from this transcendent origin and through this universality, but still with the individual as the soul-channel and natural instrument, constitute the essence of the integral divine perfection of the human being."[1]

The three highest forms of union aimed at by the three great schools of Indian Yoga, Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Tantra,—Sayujya, Samipya and Sarupya—are fused into one all-comprehending union which combines the rapt ecstasy of the embrace of the Eternal with the thrilled dynamism of His self-expression in Time. All nature and all life are included in the sweep of this integral union and every fibre of our complex being is meant to find in it its perfect fulfilment. This union is the sovereign means of reproduction, in the triple term of mind, life and body, of the triple supreme principle of the transcendent Existence, Sat, Chit and Ananda, through the conscious and co-operating agency of the full-fledged psychic, the soul of

[1] *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. IV

man; of an unblemished transcription of the infinite glories of the Spirit in finite living and thinking Matter. That which most impedes the attainment of this integral union is the dense physical being of man, entrenched in its obscurity and inert conservatism, and reluctant to open or respond to the higher light. Most initiates of Eternity have, therefore, sought to enjoy the transporting bliss of the divine union in the remote depths or on the lonely peaks of their being, leaving the physical part to vegetate in its habitual obscurity. It is only the rare heroic souls, the intrepid warriors of the Spirit, who have struggled to redeem the physical and render it capable of reflecting something of the light and power and ecstasy welling out of the union. But all that has been really achieved up to the present by way of redemption is a modicum of purification and illumination, but not a radical conversion and transfiguration; and without a total conversion and transfiguration of the physical being, the outer personality, it is impossible to have an integral and uninterrupted union with the Divine in active life;—the surface self will either lie quiescent and sterile while the soul is entranced in the beatitude of the inner union, or dilute and distort and spill what is transmitted to it for expression. A perfect physical expression of the fruits of union has hardly been possible as yet in human life.

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual power has been bent on the achievement of the integral divine union and its undiminished and undistorted expression in the normal work-a-day life of humanity; but for this supreme consummation of the evolutionary effort of the human soul, two things are indispensable: a pioneer individual perfection and a progressive reproduction of the individual perfection in the general nature of the collectivity. But the individual, being a part of the collectivity, and not an isolated unit, cannot completely identify himself with the Divine until the rampant impurities of the collective nature have been to a certain extent eliminated. It is this dual work of individual and collective transformation that has been the mission and labour of Sri Aurobindo, and we shall miss all the significance, all the superlative greatness of it, if we lose sight of these two aspects of his ideal. No individual, however great he may be, can attain to the integral divine perfection through the integral divine union until the earth-consciousness itself has undergone a revolutionary transformation and the earth-conditions have definitely changed in its favour. The integral union with the Divine, as understood by Sri Aurobindo, is the ultimate and inevitable destiny of mankind, but it is an ideal that is to be striven for and attained, and not one that has ever been achieved in the spiritual history of humanity. It

will come as the ultimate victory in a double war waged within man and without, individually and collectively.

If we bear the above salient points well in mind, we shall be able to follow the general trend of the Mother's aspiration and achievements and discover in them the same essential elements that constitute the ideal and the realisation of Sri Aurobindo, so far as the divine union is concerned.

In the very first Prayer of the "Prayers and Meditations", the Mother gives us a glimpse of the central aspiration of her being and the height of vision and experience to which she has already attained.

"I aspire for the day when I can no longer say "I", for I shall be Thou."

* * *

"I have now a constant and precise perception of the universal unity determining an absolute interdependence of all actions."

The first quotation embodies the Mother's aspiration, but the second, which is very significant, shows that the perfection of individual action depends to a great measure upon the conditions which make for the perfection of the universal action. This perception of the Mother of the interdependence of all actions is an index to the line her spiritual career has consistently taken—it is the dual line of individual and collective aspiration and conquest. It must have been a basic realisation of her consciousness, early in her life, that existence is one and indivisible, and that our individual perfection and fulfilment must include the perfection and fulfilment of all. The same idea is expressed by Sri Aurobindo in the Synthesis of Yoga, Book I:

"Accepting life, he (the sadhaka of the integral Yoga) has to bear not only his own burden, but a great part of the world's burden too along with it, as a continuation of his own sufficiently heavy load. Therefore his Yoga has much more of the nature of a battle than others'; but this is not only an individual battle, it is a collective war waged over a considerable country. He has not only to conquer in himself the forces of egoistic falsehood and disorder, but to conquer them as representatives of the same adverse and inexhaustible forces in the world. Their representative character gives them a much more obstinate capacity of resistance, an almost endless right to recurrence. Often he finds that even after he has won persistently his own personal battle, he has still to win it over and over again in a seemingly

interminable war, because his inner existence has already been so much enlarged that not only it contains his own being with its well-defined needs and experiences, but is in solidarity with the being of others, because in himself he contains the universe."

It is evident, then, that the union the Mother aspires for in these Prayers is a progressive integral union, which, even when perfect at the centre, necessarily takes long to be perfect at the peripheries. But nothing short of it can satisfy the Mother's being any more than Sri Aurobindo's. In her Prayer of the 19th November, 1912, the Mother says to the Divine:

"I said yesterday to that Englishman who is seeking for Thee with so sincere a desire, that I had definitively found Thee, that the Union was constant. Such is indeed the state of which I am conscious." A little farther on in the same Prayer, she says, "How many times already when I pronounce it (the word 'I'), it is Thou who speakest in me, for I have lost the sense of separativity."

She has found the Divine "definitively", the Union is "constant", she has lost "the sense of separativity"; and yet she calls this union "poor and precarious" in comparison with what it will be possible for her to "realise tomorrow." The inner union has been attained and stabilised: "...It is Thou who breathest, thinkest and lovest in this substance...", but the Mother would not rest till she has become "Thou", completely and irrevocably, from the highest summits of her being to its lowest plains. What is this becoming "Thou"? It is not a mere identification with the Divine in the soul and the mind,—it is a spiritual rebirth of the whole being, a remoulding of the entire apparatus of the surface and subconscient human personality, and, above all, a radical transfiguration of the body, its consciousness and its mode of working, leading to an untrembling dynamic poise in the Divine and a constant union and communion with Him in life.

"So long as one element of the being, one movement of the thought is still subjected to outside influences, not solely under Thine, it cannot be said that the true Union is realised; there is still the horrible mixture without order and light,—for that element, that movement is a world, a world of disorder and darkness, as is the entire earth in the material world, as is the the material world in the entire universe."[1]

[1] *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—Dec. 2, 1912

That is why there is an intense, unceasing aspiration in the Mother's body—it is not a mental or vital aspiration imposed upon the body, but the body's own separate, individual, unquenchable aspiration—for a dynamic union with the Supreme through service....."This body whose will is to become Thy docile instrument and Thy faithful servant."[1] "...This substance which, being Thyself, desires to be Thy willing servant."[2] This service, as the Mother understands it, is not a mere Karmayoga, a discipline of desireless and disinterested action, for the purification and liberation of the being; it has a double purpose and significance: 1) the canalising of the supreme Love and Light into the material world and 2) the preparation and transformation of Matter for the perfect Union and the eventual Manifestation. The Mother so much insists on service, because: 1) Union with the Divine cannot be integral if the body is excluded from it; for, the body, as much as the heart or the mind, has a birthright to a constant and complete union with the Divine and a perfection in the expression of that union; and it is only when all the parts of the being of man are converted and transformed enough to enter into the union, abide in it and radiate its ineffable glory, that the Union can be called integral, and the entire being of man can have its completest fulfilment. 2) It is only through service that the Will of the Divine in the world can be victoriously fulfilled. In fact, in its advanced stages, service becomes another name for an unobstructed divine self-expression.

Attuned to the same key, ring Sri Aurobindo's words: "Preserving and perfecting the physical, fulfilling the mental, it is Nature's aim and it should be ours to unveil in the perfected body and mind the transcendent activities of the Spirit. As the mental life does not abrogate but works for the elevation and better utilisation of the bodily, so too the spiritual should not abrogate but transfigure our intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and vital activities."[3]

The Mother does not regard an exclusive, unilateral tension of the mind or the heart or the will towards the Divine as capable of leading anywhere near the integral union; it is a narrow intensity within a restricted field of consciousness and barren of any considerable enduring and transforming effect upon life in the world. It can initiate the Godward turn, but cannot by itself consummate and fulfil it.

[1] *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—Nov. 3, 1912

[2] ibid., Nov. 19, 1912

[3] *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo—Book I

"Even he who might have arrived at perfect contemplation in silence and solitude, could only have done so by extracting himself from his body, by making an abstraction of himself; and thus the substance of which the body is constituted would remain as impure, as imperfect as before, since he would have abandoned it to itself; by a misguided mysticism, by the attraction of supraphysical splendours, by the egoistic desire of being united with Thee for his personal satisfaction, he would have turned his back upon the reason of his earthly existence, he would have refused cowardlike to accomplish his mission to redeem and purify Matter."[1]

The same idea informs the following words of Sri Aurobindo: "Brahman expresses Itself in many successive forms of consciousness, successive in their relation even if coexistent in being or coeval in Time, and life in its self-unfolding must also rise to ever-new provinces of its own being. But if in passing from one domain to another we renounce what has already been given us from eagerness for our new attainment, if in reaching the mental life we cast away or belittle the physical life which is our basis, or if we reject the mental and physical in our attraction to the spiritual, we do not fulfil God integrally, nor satisfy the conditions of His manifestation. We do not become perfect, but only shift the field of our imperfection or at most attain a limited altitude. However high we may climb, even though it be to the Non-Being itself, we climb ill if we forget our base. Not to abandon the lower to itself, but to transfigure it in the light of the higher to which we have attained, is true divinity of nature. Brahman is integral and unifies many states of consciousness at a time; we also, manifesting the nature of Brahman, should become integral and all-embracing."[2]

There must be an integration and harmonisation of all the parts of our being and a global turning of it to the Divine, if the integral union be the supreme objective. Very often a partial union is so overwhelming that it is easily taken for an integral one—the soul and mind and heart are immersed in bliss and peace, or the life parts vibrate with a mighty power; even the body reflects something of its glow and thrill. But that is not what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo mean by Union. They mean, as we have already seen, something more luminously and comprehensively complete, and more sovereignly effective; something in which the whole being of man, from his Self to the very cells of his body, permanently ves and moves and

[1] *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, June 15, 1913
[2] *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo, Chapter V

acts in the Divine. But this union cannot come about merely by an inner plunge and identification, or by any number of plunges and identifications. It includes also the union of our subconscient and inconscient parts with the Divine, which is possible only by the illumination and transformation of those nether regions by the direct action of the Supramental Force. It is a tremendous work, entailing a descent into the Subconscient and the Inconscient and a raising up of the dark elements which seethe or sleep there, so that they may be either destroyed or transformed into radiant spiritual energies and lend themselves to the total transformation of the physical personality of man. And, besides, according to them, union is not an end in itself,—that the soul never forfeits in its depths—it is the sole and supreme means to the ulterior end and reason of our existence, the object of the soul's descent into birth and its evolution, the purpose of the immanence of the Divine in the world, the aim of creation itself—the perfect Manifestation, the intended Epiphany of the Spirit in Matter. According to Sri Aurobindo the aim of his Integral Yoga is not only to seek and realise the Divine but to call upon Him to manifest Himself in and through us in the material world. That is not only Union, but Union multiplied, universalised and dynamically self-revealed in its native glory in humanity. And in a sweet little Prayer, written on March 13, 1913, when the Mother had not even heard of Sri Aurobindo, she too says,

"Let the pure perfume of sanctification burn always, rising higher and higher, and straighter and straighter, like the ceaseless prayer of the integral being, desiring to unite with Thee *so as to manifest Thee*."

In the next article we shall consider the essential identity[3] existing between Sri Aurobindo's idea of physical transformation through service in an integral surrender and that of the Mother as expressed by her before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo.

RISHABHCHAND

[3] Really speaking, the identity is not only essential, it is also practical, and even literal, as the Mother's frequent use of the expressions, "integral union", "perfect manifestation," "transformation", "earthly transfiguration" etc., which are the key-expressions of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and Philosophy, testifies.

THE MEETING OF THE EAST THE WEST IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

(*Continued from the last issue*)

HOW INDIAN AND WESTERN THOUGHT HAVE MET IN SRI AUROBINDO

COMING now to my main task, which is to show how Indian and Western thought have met in Sri Aurobindo, I have to make one preliminary remark, and that is, that this meeting is not a mere hand-shaking, but that there is a real synthesis of these two types of thought in him. There is even something more, a fulfilment of what each of them aims at but has not been able to realize. The West aims at a fuller realization of the evolutionary and cosmic character of its thought. But it is hampered by its intellectualism and its existential outlook. What it requires is the acceptance of a spiritual standpoint, leading to the abandonment of its existential outlook and a modification of its extreme intellectualism. Similarly, Indian thought is spiritual but individualistic and static. It must break its narrow walls of individualism and acquire a dynamic and cosmic character. Therein lies its fulfilment.

I may illustrate my remarks by citing the example of Plato. Plato is called the complete Greek. Why? Because in him all the previous thought of the Greeks—the Socratic, the Protagorean, the Pythagorean, the Eleatic, the Heraclitean, etc.,—found not merely a synthesis but a fulfilment. Plato was what Pythagoras and Heraclitus and Parmenides and Socrates wanted to be but could not be.

As the space at my disposal is limited, I shall content myself by showing how Sri Aurobindo fulfils this function by dealing with three main problems of his philosophy—(1) the problem of Evolution (2) the problem of Yoga and (3) the problem of the nature of Reality.

ILLUSTRATION FROM THE PROBLEM OF EVOLUTION

The idea of Evolution is certainly more prominent in Western than in Indian philosophy. Greek philosophy was full of it. In Heraclitus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, among the pre-Socratic philosophers, evolution played a very important rôle, and among the post-Socratic thinkers, it was Aristotle who gave it great prominence. In Plato, although it was not given so much importance as in Aristotle, yet it did have a place in the antechamber of his philosophy, when he spoke of creation and dealt with natural philosophy, as in the "Timaeus". In Aristotle evolution was teleological; it was the gradual transformation of the potential into the actual.

In modern times the theory of evolution was one of the main contributions of nineteenth century philosophy, and was developed from very different view-points, from even totally opposed standpoints, as for instance, that of Darwin and Spencer on the one hand, and Hegel on the other. The Darwin-Spencerian theory of evolution was perfectly naturalistic. From the spiritual point of view it was perfectly neutral; that is to say, evolution was no index at all of spiritual development. In other words, it was not possible to say, from the mere fact that a thing was more highly evolved than another, that it was higher from the spiritual point of view. Spencer, however, most illogically claimed that the higher from the point of view of evolution must also be looked upon as higher from the point of view of the spirit. This was, in fact, his main contention in his ethical and sociological works, though he gave absolutely no convincing reason why we should accept this contention. In fact, the naturalistic theory of evolution makes it impossible to talk of any spiritual progress. Huxley in his book *Evolution and Ethics* has denounced as strongly as possible the claim of naturalistic evolution to be ethical. "Let us understand, once for all", so runs his strong indictment of this evolution, "that the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it". This indictment, coming as it does from a man who played an important part in the development of the doctrine of evolution, is of great value.

Opposed to this naturalistic view of evolution is the Hegelian conception of it. From the Hegelian standpoint all evolution is evolution of the spirit. Even the evolution of nature is no exception to it. But Hegel understands by the spirit nothing but the Idea, that is to say, Reason. And his whole scheme of evolution is based upon logic or dialectic. Evolution, from his

point of view, is nothing else than the logical process of development of the Idea or Reason. The stages in the evolutionary process are precisely the stages in the logical development of the Idea.

The Hegelian conception of evolution is no doubt a grand one. It is certainly an antidote to the naturalistic evolution of the Darwin-Spencerian brand. But it is not completely spiritual. It takes into account only one aspect or facet of spiritual life, and elevates it to the position of the sole spiritual element. Reason no doubt is an important stage in the development of the life of the spirit. It liberates it from the arbitrariness of sensations and perceptions, and gives it stability and order. But it itself creates a new kind of bondage—the bondage of stereotyped ways of looking at things—and therefore has got to be transcended in the interest of the higher spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo takes with Hegel the spiritual view of evolution. In fact, evolution, which for him is the inverse of the process of creation and means the return of the Spirit to itself after its self-projection into the world, loses all its significance if it is not spiritual. Not only so, but for him a naturalistic evolution is a contradiction in terms. Evolution must be a movement towards a goal. If it is merely a mechanical movement without any purpose, then whatever else it may be, it cannot be called evolution. This is the lesson we learn from the system of Herbert Spencer. If evolution means merely the adaptation of the organism to a rigid physical universe then there can be no talk of any moral or social evolution. Yet Herbert Spencer extended the idea of evolution to the social and moral domain. And how did he do it? By surreptitiously substituting for a purely physical environment a social or moral environment. But this he had no right to do, for the environment contemplated by him and in relation to which he formulated his principle of evolution is purely physical, and there is no passage from this physical to a moral or social environment. But Herbert Spencer felt that with a purely physical environment there could be no talk of any progress, and as he was particularly anxious to prove that evolution meant progress, he cleverly substituted for the physical environment a moral and social one. This clearly proves that a mechanical evolution is a contradiction in terms.

Evolution thus must be a spiritual evolution or it is no evolution at all. So far Hegel is right. But from Sri Aurobindo's point of view Hegel is wrong in identifying the Spirit with Reason. For him there are several rungs in the spiritual ladder which are higher than reason. A truly spiritual

view of evolution must transcend reason. A scheme of evolution based upon pure logic cannot be the last word in evolution. Its defects are palpable. It ties consciousness for ever to one particular stage of it, namely, reason. It uses a principle which has emerged as a product of evolution as a measuring-rod for that evolution. Evolution has surprises in store for us. It is absurd to suppose that the whole course of it can be mapped out with the help of any form of consciousness that is vouchsafed to us. To suppose that such a thing is possible is tantamount to asserting that evolution cannot reach higher levels than what it has already attained. The course of evolution, as Bergson has pointed out in a brilliant passage of his book *Creative Evolution*, is not like that of a shell fired from a cannon. You cannot trace its course, remaining yourself on the ground, with the help of the logical principle of continuity. You cannot form any idea of what the next higher level of evolution will be until it has actually emerged. Logic is absolutely helpless here. Hegel's great faith in the power of logic betrayed him.

The Western conception of evolution, however, does not end with Hegel. The great French philosopher Bergson has made his theory of evolution one of the main principles of his philosophy, and has dealt with it from a view-point totally different alike from that of Darwin and Spencer, on the one hand, and that of Hegel, on the other. To distinguish effectively his view of evolution from that of the naturalists, he coined the word, Creative Evolution, to indicate his own standpoint. His great work *Creative Evolution* is perhaps the strongest indictment that exists in philosophical literature of the mechanical theory of evolution. Unfortunately Bergson has tried to demolish not only the mechanical but also the teleological view of evolution. This is really very unfortunate, for the rejection of all teleology is disastrous for Bergson's own philosophy. Bergson gives as an example of creative evolution the work of a painter. "The finished portrait", he says, "is explained by the features of the model, by the nature of the artist, by the colours spread on the palette; but, even with the knowledge of what explains it, no one, not even the artist, could have foreseen exactly what the portrait would be, for to predict it would have been to produce it before it was actually produced—an absurd hypothesis which is its own refutation. Even so with regard to the moments of our life, of which we are the artisans. Each of them is a kind of creation. And just as the talent of the painter is formed or deformed—in any case, is modified —under the influence of the works he produces, so each of our states, at

the moment of its issue, modifies our personality, being indeed the new form that we are just assuming."[1]

Now, as I have said elsewhere, "Do we see really any trace of creative activity in the description of a painter as given by him? What sort of creativity can a painter exhibit who, as Bergson depicted him, does not come to his work with any ideas about what he is going to do, but relies upon inspiration to give him the ideas as he proceeds with his work? What sort of talent does the artist exhibit who does not know how the work in which he is engaged will develop?"[2] In fact, a sourceless and aimless movement can in no sense be called creative. A flow that is not a flow towards anything, a movement that is not directed by any end, is unrelieved mechanism. In fact, what Bergson has given us is a temporal mechanism, in place of the spatial mechanism of the nineteenth century biologists. Here we have a fundamental difference between Bergson's conception of evolution and that of Sri Aurobindo. Bergson's conception is purely negative. He means by creativity simply the absence of all control, even the control by oneself. A creative act, however, does not mean one which is absolutely undetermined, but one which is the expression of a man's character, one in which the full force of one's personality is felt. The same thing is true when we pass from the individual to the cosmic plane. Creative or spiritual evolution is one in which every movement bears on its face the stamp of its spiritual origin, in which every step in the process reveals its spiritual source. This is the point which Sri Aurobindo has emphasized in his view of evolution. Evolution for him is a process, every step of which is directed by the spirit.

In fact, for Sri Aurobindo, Evolution means the Spirit's return unto itself. Just as in involution or creation it projects itself out of itself, so in evolution it comes back to itself. It is the home-coming of the Spirit. It comes back to itself in a manner which is just the reverse of that by which it went out of itself. The former process Sri Aurobindo calls also Ascent and the latter Descent. Ascent or Evolution is only possible because there has been Descent. Matter can evolve because there has been a descent of the Spirit into it. So is it with Life and Mind. Each of these can evolve because there has been a descent of the Spirit into it.

[1] Bergson : *Creative Evolution.* Authorised English Tr. by Mitchell, Macmillan. 1928. p. 7

[2] See my third article on the Philosophy of Henri Bergson ("Review of Philosophy and Religion", Oct. 1941)

Sri Aurobindo also introduces into his theory of Evolution a new idea which is not found in any system, either ancient or modern. This is the idea of integration. Evolution is not merely an ascent from a lower to a higher state. It is also an integration of the higher with the lower ones. This means that when a higher principle emerges, it descends into the lower ones causing a transformation of them. Thus when Mind emerges, not only does a new principle appear on the scene, but the lower principles of matter and life also undergo a transformation, so that they become different from what they were before the emergence of this new principle. Evolution, therefore, does not mean the isolated raising of any principle to a higher level, but an uplift and transformation of all the principles. We may therefore also call this principle the principle of solidarity.

As I have shown in my book, *Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, Bergson also has spoken of the continuous swelling of the current of life as it proceeds, of the past living in the present and continuing in the future. He has also compared evolution to the continuous lengthening of an elastic body, to the continuous coiling of a rope. But these similes only point to the fact that evolution is a continuous process without any break. They do not indicate any transformation of the lower principles by the higher. In fact, there is no place for any distinction of lower and higher in Bergson's philosophy. The distinction between higher and lower can only be maintained if there is any goal of evolution, the higher being that which is nearer the goal, and the lower that which is more distant.

There is another principle involved in Sri Aurobindo's conception of evolution which also does not occur in Bergson or for the matter of that, in any Western philosopher. It is what he calls psychicization, that is to say, the opening out of the psychic being within. Within us dwells a spark of Divinity, the purusha seated within our heart, what Sri Aurobindo calls the *chaitya purusha*. Evolution means the development of this psychic being, in order that the pure Light from it may flood the whole of our surface life, mind and matter.

The fourth condition of evolution is the descent of the higher consciousness. At every transition from a lower to a higher level of evolution, as, for instance, in the transition from matter to life and from life to mind, there is needed in Sri Aurobindo's conception of evolution the descent of a higher consciousness from above. The most vital descent for which the whole universe is waiting at present is the descent of the Supermind. This will cause a radical change in the nature of the entire universe. There is no

principle similar to this in Bergson's philosophy, though there is in the philosophy of Alexander, of which I shall now speak.

The Western philosopher whose theory of evolution comes closest to Sri Aurobindo's, is S. Alexander. In his book *Space, Time and Deity* he has given us a theory of evolution which resembles in many respects Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution. Like Sri Aurobindo's, his is also a theory of emergent evolution. Like him he also talks of the emergence of higher and higher forms of consciousness. Like him he also gives hope of the emergence of a higher consciousness than has so far emerged. The general name which he gives to a consciousness higher than what has emerged at a particular stage of evolution is Deity. Thus when evolution is at the stage of matter, Deity represents the stage of life; when evolution is at the stage of life, Deity means mind, and so on. So the consciousness higher than our present mental consciousness, which is yet to emerge, he calls 'our Deity', or simply Deity, when it is quite clear from the context that the reference is to a higher consciousness than mind.

So far there is great similarity between Sri Aurobindo's thought and Alexander's. But when we ask, what, in his view, is the nature of the Being possessing the quality Deity, in other words, what is the nature of God (for the Being possessing the quality Deity is called by him God) in his philosophy? we at once notice great differences between his views and those of Sri Aurobindo. At the very outset he makes it clear that God represents some Being totally different from man. He cannot in any sense be looked upon as a Higher Man or a Superman. Thus in a passage in his book *Space, Time and Deity* there occurs this very clear statement: "Instead of the shadowy quality of which we can only say that it is a higher quality than mind, God is made more vivid to us as a greater spirit; and we conceal the difference in kind of the divine and the human nature under magnified representations of human attributes. These are inevitable devices of our own weakness and our practical craving. *But, for philosophy, God's deity is not different from spirit in degree but in kind, as a novelty in the series of empirical qualities.*"[1]

The next question that arises is : What is the relation of God to the universe, including man? Alexander's answer is that God is the whole world possessing the quality Deity. Of him, the whole world is the 'body' and the 'deity' is the 'mind'. Lest it should be supposed that the deity

[1] S. Alexander: *Space, Time and Deity*, p. 350

animates the whole universe, Alexander is very careful to explain that God's deity, "though infinite, belongs to, or is lodged in, only a portion of the universe". Similarly, he says in another passage,[1] "Spirit, personality, mind, all these human or mental characters belong to God but not to his deity. They belong, as we must hold, not to his deity but to his 'body'."

From these extracts it is quite clear that when the higher consciousness, which Alexander calls 'deity', will emerge, man will not get any benefit, nor the rest of the lower creation constituted by life and matter. He will remain exactly where he is; perhaps his position will be worse, for as the deity of the lower creation, he is at present the directive principle of the universe, but when the higher deity will emerge, he will be relegated to the position of a mere body. Man's fate therefore is sealed. He has nothing to hope for from the emergence of the next higher consciousness. The being or beings (for Alexander sometimes speaks of a race of gods) who will emerge with this higher consciousness will stand related to man as the mind to the body. Man's history therefore will end with the emergence of this higher consciousness. A dark fate awaits him when for eternity he will have to remain, along with Space-Time and Matter, as an inert background for the new race of gods that will emerge with the higher consciousness. What a destiny for man! Can he contemplate it with equanimity? I think Nietzsche was more merciful to him when he said that out of his ashes the new race of Supermen will emerge. Better far indeed that man died completely than that he should have to live for eternity as a dark background for a new race of beings!

In striking contrast to this is Sri Aurobindo's message. It is the destiny of man to receive the higher consciousness and to be transformed into the Divine Man, not to be crushed into a lifeless, soulless existence for eternity. The advent of the Higher Consciousness is an event of unspeakable joy not only for him but for the whole creation. The Higher Consciousness, in fact, is the *Navajātaka*, the New-Born, to use an expression of Tagore's, whose advent brings universal joy to the entire creation. Joy is not the word for it; it is something infinitely greater and grander than joy. It is some kind of bliss, of which we have occasionally some faint glimmerings in some of our highest ecstatic moods.

But halt! there is something worse still. We have taken Alexander to mean that the quality deity is going to be realized in some being called God.

[1] S. Alexander: *Space, Time and Deity*, p. 349

But strictly speaking, from his standpoint deity is an eternally realizing but unrealizable quality. As soon as it is realized in any being, that being becomes finite. God can therefore never be an actuality. As the matter is one of considerable importance, I quote his exact words: "We are now led to a qualification of the greatest importance. The picture which has been drawn of an infinite God is a concession to our figurative or mythological tendency and to the habit of the religious consciousness to embody its conception of God in an individual shape...But the infinite God is purely ideal or conceptual. The individual so sketched is not asserted to exist. As actual, God does not possess the quality of deity but is the universe as tending to that quality. The nisus in the universe, though not present to sense, is yet present to reflection upon experience. Only in the sense of straining towards deity can there be an infinite actual God. For, again following the lines of experience, we can see that if the quality of deity were actually attained in the empirical development of the world in Time, we should have not one infinite being possessing deity but many (at least potentially many) finite ones. Beyond these finite gods or angels there would be in turn a new empirical quality looming into view, which for them would be deity—that is, would be for them what deity is for us...If the possessor of deity were an existent individual he must be finite and not infinite. Thus there is no actual infinite being with the quality of deity; but there is an actual infinite, the whole universe, with a nisus to deity, and this is the God of the religious consciousness, though that consciousness habitually forecasts the divinity of its object as actually realized in an individual form."[1]

Thus God is not an actual existing Being possessing the quality deity, but only another name for the universe with a nisus to deity. Yet Alexander thinks that such a God can evoke religious emotion! A non-existent God who is another name for a Space-Time ordained universe with a nisus to an infinite higher consciousness is supposed fit to be an object of religious worship! What a poor conception of religious consciousness! It seems that Alexander has no objection, from the metaphysical point of view, to looking upon the Space-Time matrix as God. Only he thinks it will hurt our religious susceptibility if it is called God. As if religious susceptibility is not hurt by making a non-existent God who is an evolute of Space-Time an object of worship! It would really have been much better if he had made Space-Time his God. The reasons which he has given for not doing so will not

[1] S. Alexander: *Space, Time and Deity*, p. 361

convince anybody. There is no doubt that it would have been more in consonance with his metaphysical principles if he had done so. For Space-Time is really his metaphysical Absolute. Everything else, including the successive deities, is an evolute of it. The whole scheme is materialistic. Really speaking, there is no place for any God in it. Not to speak of God, there is no place for any mind or even for life in it. How can Space-Time evolve and bring out of it something which never has been, nor can ever be in it, and whose nature is totally different from its nature? Evolution must have a method. You cannot evolve a camel out of a stone. How can Space-Time, which is totally innocent of anything spiritual, develop a nisus towards deity? The truth is, Alexander has most arbitrarily foisted upon his theory of evolution which in its structure is thoroughly materialistic, a spiritual principle that has absolutely no relation to it.

The thing is, Alexander does not start with any idea of what evolution is and what it sets out to achieve. Why does Space-Time evolve at all? What is the inner spring of this evolution? How does it develop a nisus towards deity, unless deity is already concealed in it? It is his failure to answer these questions that has marred his whole theory of evolution. It is, in fact, no better than the nineteenth century naturalistic theories of evolution which also similarly stated that somehow matter evolved into life, life into mind, and so on. The only point where Alexander's theory is superior to these naturalistic theories of evolution is in its definite assertion that mind is not the apex of the evolutionary process but that there are higher stages beyond mind.

Here the superiority of Sri Aurobindo's position is beyond question. He has not only answered the 'why' of evolution but also its 'how'. For him evolution is nothing else than the inverse of the process of creation. You cannot understand evolution without linking it to creation. It is because the Spirit has involved itself in matter, that matter can evolve into life, life representing something which has more of the spiritual element in it than matter. The same is true of the evolution of life into mind, and of mind into the Supermind. Evolution, in fact, is another name for the return of the Spirit to itself. The Spirit which out of its own sheer joy of self-expression (Lila) projected itself out of itself, reaching the farthest limit of such self-projection in matter, has to come back to itself. This coming back to itself is what is called evolution. It is clear, therefore, that the successive stages of evolution must represent a hierarchical order, the higher stages containing more of the essence of the Spirit than the lower

ones. The process cannot stop until the highest stage, which is nothing less than the Source from which the whole process started, namely, the Ultimate Reality or *Saccidānanda* is reached. In this way Sri Aurobindo supplies the missing link in the theories of evolution of Alexander and others. Unless evolution is connected with creation, it loses all meaning. Creation is the movement downward from the Spirit, and evolution is the movement upward to the Spirit, made possible by the downward movement of the Spirit. In fact, the two really form one process. This clearly explains the nisus between deity which is an inexplicable mystery in Alexander's system. This explains also why the lower principles continue to evolve even after the emergence of the higher ones. Alexander supposes that the evolution of the lower principles stops with the emergence of the higher ones. Thus in his view the evolution of matter and life stops with the emergence of mind, that of mind stops with the emergence of deity, and so on. This is also the reason why he speaks of the entire lower creation, consisting of matter, life and mind, as forming the 'body' of the Higher Being or Beings in whom deity emerges.

The real weakness of Alexander's theory of evolution—and indeed of all Western theories of evolution—is the absence of any true spiritual principle underlying it. His real Absolute is Space-Time. His God is a floating God that can neither be a metaphysical Absolute nor the God of religion. There is no place for any spiritual nisus in his theory of evolution. A Space-Time universe cannot develop any spiritual nisus. He has deluded himself—and also his readers—into thinking that he has given us a spiritual view of evolution. In reality he has given us a purely materialistic view of it.

To conclude my survey of the Western theories of evolution: their main defect is that they are not sufficiently spiritual. They are cosmic. Their viewpoint is undoubtedly over-individual. But unfortunately, they are not sufficiently spiritual. The naturalistic evolutionary theories of the nineteenth century were frankly mechanical. But even the Hegelian view of evolution, in spite of its vaunted spirituality, is not sufficiently spiritual. For it identifies the Spirit with Reason. But reason does not represent the highest type of spirituality. There are several rungs in the spiritual ladder above reason. Consequently, a truly spiritual view must transcend reason. Bergson, again, in his anxiety to avoid mechanical rigidity, has gone to the extreme of eliminating all teleology from his theory of evolution. But this has reduced it to the position of that same dreaded mechanical evolution from which its express purpose was to give us deliverance. Alexander tried

most arbitrarily to foist a nisus towards spirituality upon a completely materialistic universe in his theory of evolution. Thus what all these different theories of evolution in the West lacked was a proper spiritual element.

Coming now to the Indian systems of philosophy, as I have already said, the problem of Evolution does not interest them as much as it does Western philosophy. The reason is twofold. In the first place, Indian philosophy is mainly interested in the destiny of the individual, and does not show much concern for the fate of the universe. Secondly, on account of the predominance of the cyclical view, Evolution becomes only a passing phase, since it is followed inevitably by Laya or Dissolution, and that again by another Evolution, and so on. Cosmically, therefore, there is for Indian philosophy a Maypole dance of Evolution and Dissolution leading nowhere. While all this mechanical cosmic dance of Evolution and Dissolution goes on, the individual, if he obtains the right knowledge or performs the right kind of work or obtains Divine Grace, according to different schools of thought, obtains complete and permanent release from this world dance, that is to say, for him there is complete and permanent cessation of this dance, what is called *ātyantika laya*. The characteristics of this *ātyantika laya*, from the point of view of knowledge, are very beautifully described in *Srīmadbhāgavata* xii. 4. 31-34. Even the Sankhya, which is supposed to take evolution seriously, is not interested in it as a cosmic process but only so far as it relates to the interests of the *puruṣas* or individual souls. Shankara in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras, Adhyaya 2, Pada 2, Sutras 1-10 has shown how absolutely illogical is the claim of the Sankhya that an unconscious *Prakṛti* evolves for the sake of the purposes of the *puruṣas*. In the first place the Sankhya has no right to talk of the purposes of the *puruṣas*, for it takes the *puruṣas* to be absolutely *nirguṇa* and *niṣkriya*, that is, attributeless and inactive. How can inert and attributeless *puruṣas* have any purpose? Secondly, the two purposes mentioned, that of enjoyment and that of salvation, are contradictory of each other. Thirdly, so far as the purpose of salvation is concerned, how can it be furthered by the evolution of *Prakṛti*? How can that which requires the complete cessation of movement be helped by the movement of *Prakṛti*? But the most smashing argument which he advances against the Sankhya theory of evolution is that in the whole history of human experience there is no example of any unconscious substance, without the agency of an intelligent being, constructing things which serve the purposes of conscious being. Not to speak of the vast universe peopled by so many divers beings, even such small things as a house, a bed, a seat or

a playground, have never been known to be created by unconscious substances without the agency of conscious beings.[1] Shankara's criticism is fatal to all systems of unconscious or mechanical evolution, to the Sankhya as much as to the modern Western representatives of it.

But, apart from this, the cyclical conception of the universe, which makes evolution and dissolution always follow each other, renders evolution absolutely meaningless. If evolution is to have any meaning, it must be conceived as a steady march to a higher goal. Moreover, it must have a cosmic character. If it is merely there to enable individuals to obtain salvation, and that, too, not by its continuance, but by its complete suppression, then it must be called an elaborate metaphysical joke.

Nowhere perhaps has Sri Aurobindo's genius shown itself to greater perfection than in his handling of the problem of evolution. He has accepted the cosmic view of evolution of the West but has rejected its mechanical character and replaced it by a spiritual evolution. Likewise he has rejected the cyclical view of the universe so dear to our country and the individualistic outlook of our theory of evolution, and substituted for it the cosmic and overpersonal outlook of the West. The result is an altogether new theory of evolution, unlike anything found either in the East or in the West. It bases itself upon the idea that the source of evolution being *Saccidānanda* himself, it cannot stop until the whole world is completely Divinised. No limited objective, such as the naturalistic ideal of a perfect adjustment between the organism and the environment or the realization of a kingdom of ends, which is Kant's social ideal, can be looked upon as the goal of evolution. The goal of evolution is nothing less than to reach *Saccidānanda* himself, from whom the whole world has originated. What the thinkers in our country ignored is the great truth that a Divinised man can only emerge in a Divinised world. The problem of salvation is intimately connected with that of evolution. In fact, evolution may be called a Cosmic Yoga. This brings me to the problem of Yoga.

(*To be concluded*)

S. K. MAITRA

[1] Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*, 2. 2. 1:
गेहप्रासादशयनासनविहारभूम्यादयो हि लोके प्रज्ञावद्भिर्यथाकालं सुखदुःखप्राप्तिपरिहारयोग्या रचिता दृश्यन्ते. . . कथमचेतनं प्रधानं रचयेत् त्वाष्ट्रपाषाणादिष्वदृष्टत्वात्।

THE DOCTRINE OF MAYA

(*Continued from the last issue*)

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF MAYAVADA

TO turn now to a critical examination of the doctrine of the unreality of the world as sketched above. The essence of the above interpretation of *Māyāvāda* is that the world though unreal is somehow—that is, in some mysterious fashion—presented to the individual consciousness. In other words, although the world is unreal from the ultimate standpoint, still it is real from the empirical or phenomenal point of view. Now, the question is, what is the precise relation between these two distinct points of view? How are we to understand the mode of transition from the transcendental to the cosmic view-point? The usual reply to a question like the above may be briefly stated as follows. It is argued that the question itself is ill-conceived, proceeding as it does from ignorance. From the supreme standpoint of Brahman, there is no world and no individual consciousness, and consequently the question of any transition from the ultimate to the empirical standpoint does not arise at all. But, if so, why talk of the empirical standpoint at all, and how can the individual be said to be involved in the empirical standpoint? The cleverest reply to the above query is something as follows. It is argued that the concept of Maya precisely signifies this, that though there is in truth no world, *somehow* the world appears to be; and that though there is really no room for any empirical or cosmic standpoint, *somehow* it emerges and gets individuals involved within it. Now, this 'somehow' is a very clever and ingenious device which is employed to cover ultimate philosophic difficulties. An appeal to the 'somehow' in explanation of the genesis and status of the entire world of manifestation, is, to put it bluntly, a mark of intellectual bankruptcy. This is not, of course, to suggest that the admission of the inexplicable necessarily constitutes a point of weakness in a philosophical system. If Reality divided by Reason always leaves a remainder, then all sound philosophy has got

to accommodate some such thing as a final inexplicability. The frank admission of the alogical or supra-logical factor in reality can hardly be regarded as the failure of philosophic thinking.

When Bradley says that the finite appearances are somehow transformed into elements of harmony in the life of the Absolute, there is a deeper rationality in that proposition, and as such the 'somehow' involved therein is not altogether unacceptable to our understanding. It is surely more reasonable to say that the Infinite has the power of reconciling the contradictions inherent in the finite than to affirm that the finite appearances flatly contradict the nature of the Infinite, an exhaustive knowledge of which is in the nature of the case impossible. Similarly, when the Upanishads declare that Brahman is *nirguṇo guṇī* (qualityless, yet possessed of infinite qualities), that which is inexplicable here to our understanding can quite possibly be a luminous factor in the heart of that Supreme Reality which is the source of all existence including our reason or understanding itself. That which proves quite satisfactory as an inclusive principle of explanation and which has the support of deep and luminous experience, has undoubtedly a title to warm reception in philosophy, even though it may appear inexplicable or self-discrepant to our logical understanding. But what about the inexplicability of Maya? Maya is neither explicable or intelligible in itself, nor is it of any avail in rendering our experience intelligible. Maya is just a frank acknowledgement of the inexplicable character of the cosmic process. It is neither a principle of explanation or category of interpretation of our experience, nor is it compatible with the immediate apprehension of the supreme Truth. Maya is not a principle of explanation, because the world cannot be shown by it as necessarily or organically connected with the Absolute. It is not also compatible with the supreme Truth, because immediately Brahman is realised it disappears as a mere nothing. Now, an inexplicability which explains nothing and which owns no organic connection with the nature of ultimate reality, is more a liability than an asset,—it creates more difficulties than it can solve.

DIFFICULTIES ABOUT LOCUS OF AJNANA

Let us now turn to a brief consideration of some formidable difficulties which go to wreck the doctrine of Maya from within. The very first question which is forced into our mind is—What is the locus or *āśraya* of Maya? It is often shrewdly replied that the question is one which ought not to be

asked at all. Maya is not an existent or a real entity which might require a support for its maintenance and functioning. Maya is in its essence a positive unreality, an objective falsehood, a mysterious no-fact. But still her positive and objective character as a cosmic principle consists in the fact that she is capable of exercising the dual function of screening and projecting, or veiling and creating (*āvaraṇa and vikṣepa*). Now, how can she perform these functions except in co-operation with some principle of consciousness? If Maya means *ajñāna* and if the term *ajñāna* has any meaning at all, then there must be a conscious principle which is affected by or is subjected to *ajñāna. Ajñāna* or ignorance presupposes some consciousness which is ignorant. Now, who is subject to *ajñāna*? Or, to put it technically, who does function as the locus of *ajñāna?* Is it Brahman that may be said to be subject to *ajñāna* or be ignorant? That would be a preposterous supposition, because Brahman being pure consciousness or pure knowledge or the self-luminous Spirit, *ajñāna* is simply incompatible with it, or, as it is said, *ajñāna* is *tuccha* from the standpoint of Brahman. It has been argued that *ajñāna* is not incompatible with Brahman and does not destroy its self-luminous character, just as the cloud does not impair the self-luminosity of the sun even though it may temporarily screen away the self-shining sun from men dwelling upon earth. But nobody can fail to note here that there could not have been any hiding of the sun by the cloud had there been no men existing outside of the sun, and that the self-luminosity of the sun would certainly have been destroyed had the black stretches of cloud been within the sun itself? Sarvajnatmamuni Prakasatman, and Anandabodha who belong to the old school of the Advaita Vedanta contend that Brahman reveals *ajñāna* without being affected by it, and that what is incompatible with *ajñāna* is not the pure undivided consciousness of Brahman but the modified consciousness reflected in the psychosis of the Jiva, *vṛttipratiphalitajñāna.* They have recourse to an analogy by way of illustrating this point. It is well known that the rays of the sun in their natural condition light up things like cotton, straw, etc., but the same solar rays when focussed through a lens burn up the latter. Similarly, pure consciousness which sustains *avidyā* destroys it when it is reflected in the mental *vṛtti* or psychosis of the man who attains liberation.

Now, we do not wish to raise here the question how *vṛttijñāna* which is itself a product of *avidyā* is capable of destroying *avidyā.* But we find that the difficulty of the matter has been sought to be smoke-screened by some misleading analogies. Prakasatman and others are not certainly prepared

to admit that there is an external relation of ontological separation between Brahman and Avidya analogous to the relation between the sun and the straw etc. And yet it is precisely the assumption of such a relationship that lends force to the above analogy. Then again, what is meant by saying that pure consciousness sustains or reveals *ajñāna* without being in any way affected by it? What is the character in which *ajñāna* is revealed by pure consciousness, and who suffers from this *ajñāna*? The word '*ajñana*' necessarily implies a person who is in *ajñāna* and who suffers from it. Without this implication it would be reduced to an unmeaning sound. Does the pure consciousness reveal *ajñāna* as the ignorance or illusory knowledge of the *Jiva*? In that case, it is by implication, the Jiva, and not Brahman, which functions as the locus, seat or asraya of *ajñāna*, and it would be instructive to proceed now to examine that view.

IS JIVA THE LOCUS OF AJNANA?

Vachaspati Misra holds that *avidyā* is located in the finite Jiva-consciousness, and not in Brahman. But how can the Jiva, who is himself the product of *Avidyā*, function as the seat of primal *Avidyā*? Does not Vachaspati's position involve a vicious circle? Madhusudan Saraswati refutes this charge and explains Vachaspati's position in the following way. Madhusudan says that the Jiva is not *in toto* a creation of *Avidyā*. The Jiva has two aspects, the aspect of consciousness and the aspect of limitation. It is the limited character of the Jiva which is the creation of *Avidyā*; in respect of its consciousness it is identical with Brahman. "Both finite consciousness and *Avidyā* are without a beginning in time, both exist simultaneously from eternity—one is the principle of modification and the other is the subject modified."[1] But while *avidyā* depends upon the Jiva for its very existence, the Jiva depends upon *avidyā* not in respect of its being or consciousness, but only in respect of its limitation. The Jiva-Consciousness is identical with Brahman just as the pot-enclosed space is in truth identical and continuous with the sky-pervading space, i.e., the all-embracing infinite space. Now, closer examination will reveal that there is here much confusion of thought arising from verbal ambiguity and employment of misleading analogies. The pot-and-sky analogy involves four distinguishable factors: first, the sky-pervading infinite space which stands for Brahman; secondly, the pot which is supposed to bear functional resemblance to *avïdyā*; thirdly, the pot-

[1] Vide A.T. Sastri's *Post-Shankara Dialectics*, p. 289

enclosed space which symbolises the Jiva; and fourthly, the imperfect consciousness of man to whom the pot-enclosed space presents the appearance of being separated from the all-encompassing space, and but for whom there is nowhere any real division or separation in the infinite and undivided space. A clear discrimination of these factors will go to show that the above analogy definitely disproves the theory in support of which it is cited. The pot does not depend upon the pot-enclosed space; the truth lies rather the other way about. So it cannot be said on the basis of this analogy that *avidyā* is located in the Jiva-consciousness. Secondly, the pot generates the pot-enclosed space by working upon or limiting the unlimited space, so that *avidyā* also must be said to generate the Jiva-consciousness by working upon the infinite and undivided consciousness. Thirdly, the pot does not limit the unlimited space; it only appears to do so from the standpoint of the ignorance of man. Likewise, *avidyā* does not in fact separate the Individual Self of Jivatman from Paramatman, it only presents the appearance of doing so to the obscure and limited consciousness of the empirical ego. This implies that in accounting for the empirical individual, that is, the individual *qua* separated from Brahman, one has to presuppose the same empirical individual, that is, the individual suffering from ignorance. Madhusudan says that while *avidyā* depends upon the Jiva for its very being, the Jiva depends upon *avidyā* not in respect of its consciousness or being but in respect of its limitation only. Does he mean to suggest by this that while the Jiva as a limited entity is the product of the Ignorance, the Jiva in respect of his consciousness is the original support of the Ignorance? But the consciousness of the Jiva is twofold, empirical and transcendental. The empirical consciousness of the Jiva—the consciousness in respect of which he is the separative Ego, the *Aham*, is plainly the product of *avidyā*, and as such can hardly function as the original support of *avidyā*. The transcendental consciousness of the Jiva,—the consciousness in respect of which he is the immortal Jivatman, the spiritual Self,—is, according to the Shankarite, absolutely non-different from Brahman, from whose standpoint *avidyā* is a mere nothing. So the transcendental consciousness of the Jiva can as little function as the original support of *avidyā* as Brahman itself.

IS ISWARA THE ASRAYA OF AVIDYA?

Thus we find that neither Brahman nor the Jiva can be supposed to be the *āśraya* of *avidyā*. But may it not be that we have omitted to consider

that very principle which really sustains *avidyā?* The suggestion has been made that it is *Iśwara* or the dynamic divine consciousness who is the ultimate seat or original support of Maya. It is believed that Maya is the creative power of the Lord of the universe, and that it is with His sanction and support that Maya always embarks upon her career of unceasing creation. Let us pause and ponder over the suggestion. According to Shankara, *Māyā, Ajñāna, and Avidyā*, these are all synonymous terms. Is Iswara then the seat of *Ajñāna* in the sense that He is at least to some extent influenced or modified by *Ajñāna* even though He may not be deluded by it like the Jiva? That is what the position of the Shankarite comes to when he refers to Iswara as the consciousness qualified by Maya, *māyā-viśiṣtacetanā*. Brahman or the supreme Reality is, according to the Shankarite, an absolutely unqualified unity, *nirviśeṣa sattva*, from whose standpoint the entire manifold comprising God, World and Soul (Iswara, Jagat, and Jiva) is a mere naught *tuccha*. It is due to the activity of Maya or *Ajñāna* that God considers Himself to be possessed of an infinite number of qualities, *saguṇa*, and believes Himself to be the Creator, Governor and Destroyer of the infinite worlds, though in truth the only reality is the one pure infinite and undifferentiated consciousness. Now, a slight reflection will show that Mayavada falls here into a vicious circle. If Iswara is what He is due to the activity of Maya, then He is evidently a product of Maya, and as such presupposes the activity of Maya. How can then this Iswara function as the ultimate seat or originating source of Maya? It is a clear case of 'arguing in a circle' to suggest that Iswara is the original support of Maya and that Maya is the conditioning principle of Iswara. The Shankarite has devised various means of breaking this vicious circle. One way of escape lies in holding that Iswara is the locus of *Ajñāna* in so far as He is in some measure subject to it, but that He is not the originating source of *Ajñāna* The origin of *Ajñāna* is shrouded in mystery. But a close scrutiny will make it clear that this appeal to the mysterious is no philosophical solution. True, every system of thought is entitled to hold that its ultimate principle is self-existent or *causa sui*, so that no question ought to be asked with regard to its origin. But the ultimate principle is, according to the Shankarite, Brahman and not Maya. The adherent of Mayavada has therefore to show either that Maya corresponds to an imperative truth in the nature of Brahman or that it is a final mystery in regard to which no further question is to be asked. On the former alternative, the doctrine of unreality of the world is blown to pieces. And on the latter alternative, the monistic conception of reality yields place to unmitigated dualism.

Another suggested way of escape from the aforesaid vicious circle lies in completely identifying Iswara with Brahman and in maintaining that the transcendental consciousness which Brahman or Iswara is sustains or reveals *Ajñāna* without being in the least affected by it. The world is in this view the expression of the sportive activity of Iswara. He originates and spreads the whole game, without having any illusion about its reality. He is fully aware that the cosmic manifold is in truth unreal, and that He is not in fact modified by the apparent qualities of being Creator, Ruler and Destroyer of the universe. This is like a man's continuing to see a stick bent in water even after he is assured of its uniform straightness or like a man's seeing that the landscape is rushing opposite to the moving train even when he is convinced of the unreality of the phenomenon; or like the magician's consciousness of the unreality of his magical show. So Iswara who is identical with Brahman is quite capable of functioning as the original support of Maya, which like the magician's skill presents the cosmic kaleidoscope to the deluded Jivas. But even this interpretation of Mayavada cannot bear close examination. The skill or sleight of hand of the magician is, as we know, relative to the ignorance of the spectators. If the analogy of the magician is to be substantiated, it must be admitted that the operations of Maya presuppose the independent reality of individual selves who are deluded by Maya to perceive as real what is unreal. This is unmitigated pluralism. Moreover, the analogy reveals God or Brahman as a cruel deluding Agent whose sportive activity spells untold sufferings and miseries to millions of poor souls. Then again, it is said that Iswara cognises the cosmic manifold even though He is aware of its unreality. This shows that Iswara-Consciousness in its distinctive character is the subject consciousness of the objective appearance; and it is also a dynamic consciousness in so far as it feels itself to be the Creator, Ruler and Destroyer of the universe. To identify such an objective and dynamic consciousness with Brahman which is pure unobjective consciousness and which is as much above the distinction of static and dynamic as above the differentiation of subject and object, is to court a flat self-contradiction. It is true that in a sense there is a relation of non-difference between Iswara and Brahman. But they are non-different not in the sense that Iswara *qua* Iswara is identical with Brahman, but in the sense that Brahman is the only reality, and that Iswarahood is only an illusory superimposition on the pure undifferentiated consciousness of Brahman due to the activity of Maya, just as separative individuality or egoism is an illusory superimposition on the Jivatman. But in that case it would be meaningless to assert that Iswara

is the ultimate seat or originating source of Maya, the power of Ignorance. Iswara emerges into being when somehow Brahman begins to think as if it had infinite qualities, and when somehow it gets related to a world of unreal objective appearances, even though it remains eternally unaffected by such objective and dynamic consciousness. But can we imagine any power which can influence Brahman into such false and illusory thinking? If that power be a power inherent in Brahman itself, then it must be admitted that Brahman is not altogether *nirguṇa*, i.e., devoid of all qualities and powers. But how can Brahman's own inherent power be held responsible for even His apparent self-forgetfulness and deluded self-regard as Iswara? If it be said that the power of Maya is called into activity for the purpose of *Līlā* (i.e., sportive activity or playful creativity), then Brahman becomes endowed with a will-to-play, and consequently we travel further away from the Mayavadin's conception of Brahman as undifferentiated consciousness. These difficulties can be obviated by maintaining that from the standpoint of Brahman the entire cosmic manifold including God, World and Soul is simply non-existent. So the question of Brahman being influenced to the extent of feeling itself as Knower or Creator of the universe does not arise at all. But in that case, whatever else Brahman might be, it would not be the philosophic Ultimate or the supreme principle of explanation of the world of manifoldness.

REALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF MAYAVADA AND INTEGRAL IDEALISM

That the realm of the manifold is simply non-existent, *tuccha* from the standpoint of the supreme Truth is the necessary logical sequel to the doctrine of Maya or Avidya. But this is a conclusion which is abhorrent to our reason and experience. Howsoever unreal the world may be, it surely appears to us, and so there must be a Power which is responsible for projecting the unreal into the realm of objective appearance. Our reason demands that this Power must be somehow connected, and connected derivatively, with the supreme Reality, so that we may not fall into the ditch of dualism. Some adherents of the doctrine of Maya hold, as we have already seen, that this demand of reason can be easily met by sticking to the objective or realistic interpretation of Mayavada. We have already discussed the numerous difficulties which are inherent in such a realistic interpretation, but let us for the moment set on one side those difficulties. Let us admit that when Mayavada declares the world to be unreal or *mithyā*, the real import of this declaration

is that the world falls short of the ultimate Reality or Brahman, and that it is possessed of a lower or inferior order of mysterious or indeterminate reality. It would be instructive to institute here a comparison between the theory of Avidya as realistically interpreted and the attitude of Integral Idealism in regard to the objective universe. The former takes its stand upon the reality of the phenomenal world, even though this reality may be of a different order from, and definitely inferior to, the ultimate reality of Brahman. Integral Idealism also is constant in its affirmation of the reality of the world of our common experience. What then is the difference between the two? Is Integral Idealism in entire agreement with the realistic view of Mayavada so far as the question of the reality of the external world is concerned? The answer is emphatically in the negative. There is a vast difference between the two beneath their superficial resemblance, and it is in a right perception of this difference that a proper appreciation of the supramental or integral idealism of Sri Aurobindo would consist. Integral Idealism does not rest content with a mere affirmation of some sort of reality of the world. It looks upon the world, in perfect keeping with the vision of the Upanishadic Seers, as a genuine self-manifestation of the Supreme, as the rhythmic expression of Its eternal delight. For the Mayavadin, the world, even when it is accepted as real, is not, strictly speaking, a mode of manifestation of Brahman, in as much as the world does not correspond to any imperative truth or necessity in the nature of Brahman. But according to Integral Idealism, Brahman has both a static and a dynamic aspect; and the dynamic aspect of Brahman lies in its will to self-manifestation, of which the world is the outcome. In the second place, Mayavada is loath to invest our life in the world with any genuine significance even when it accepts it as real in some sense or other. Our terrestrial life being void of any significance, the sooner we get out of it the better for us. The *summum bonum* of our life consists in realising the utter vanity and ephemeral character of the whole phenomenal show and in getting absorbed in Brahman, or, to be more precise, in recognising the non-difference of the Self from the featureless Brahman from whose standpoint the cosmic phantasmagoria is simply meaningless if not absolutely non-existent.

(*To be Concluded*)

HARIDAS CHAUDHURY

INDIA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD TODAY*

I HAVE been hardly three weeks in England. During this period I have been constantly on the move, seeing things, meeting people, forming impressions. I have by turns been fascinated, bewildered, and transported; yet I have on the whole felt quite at home—whether amidst the rattle and drive of the city or the elected silences of the countryside. On the other hand, I have been unable to find the time to think seriously about the subject your Secretary had "given" to me. I am by no means bursting with a message, and accordingly this is no formal lecture. A thinking aloud among friends is all that I shall attempt now.

In 1947—August 15, 1947—Britain withdrew finally her political control over India. India became free. Freedom was welcome, no doubt, and we duly celebrated our date with destiny, all the more so because it coincided with the seventy-fifth birthday of India's great Rishi, Sri Aurobindo. Yet, for many of us, the joy was tinged with a certain sadness as well. It was, we thought, no more than a flawed, fissured, and fractured freedom. I refer, of course, to the Partition of India and the numerous islets of princedoms which, for a time, threatened to render our freedom a hideous mockery. Perhaps "partition" had to be, but it did obscure our freedom's horizon. Then came the "aftermath" of Partition—the communal orgies, the mass exodus of populations, and the problem of assimilating these uprooted masses of humanity. The world watched India—on the whole with sympathy and understanding. Here was a Republic with a population of 300 millions, a Republic which, after prolonged heart-searchings and mind-probings, had deliberately chosen to remain within the Commonwealth. What was going to be the fate of this infant Republic—what was going to be the future of this ancient people who had just celebrated their baptism of rebirth as a free people? And what part was India—and her "teeming millions"—going to play in the world?

* Substance of an address delivered before the N. E. Leeds branch of the United Nations Association on the 8th October 1951.

Many are apt to assume that because India is a so-called "sub-continent" with a "teeming population"—the more's the pity, perhaps!—she is bound to play a dominant part in the world of today and tomorrow. It was often facilely assumed during the last war that Russia, America, China and India would emerge from it as the "big four" nations of the world. More recently, a cultured English gentleman, while I was dining with him in London, told me that India was sure to play a very prominent part in the affairs of the Commonwealth, and so of the world. I answered that although that was quite possible, it was by no means inevitable. Extensive territory, ample natural resources, a rich heritage from the past, almost unlimited man-power—these are certainly important factors, but they are not the only determining ones. Great have been the achievements of small nations —ancient Greece, Elizabethan England. The question rather is what the people of India today are going to do with the resources and the opportunities that are theirs—what they are going to do with themselves and how they are going to meet the challenge of the Time Spirit. After all, we are not enacting archeology or Utopia or pastoral romance, but that far sterner drama of History.

To speak in terms of clear-headed realism, our main concern in India today is to solve our own primary problems—in other words, making available to our people food, clothes, houses, education, medical relief, fruitful work and reasonable living conditions. But, then, in the modern world—which is intricately interlinked—it is not possible to say that we are going to set our own house in order, and hence we have no time or inclination to look out of the window or saunter into the open. We want others to help us;—can we not, in our turn, give something to others? Like human beings, nations too are members of one another, and have to learn to "pull together" in the best sense of the term.

Commerce, the exchange of commodities, no doubt goes on all the time, but are we in India in a position to "give" or gift away? Are we advanced enough in the ways of civilization to teach others? In science and technology?—No. In armaments?—No. In the art of Government?—No. Have we perfected a sane and equitable social life which others can imitate?—No. In food and in money, we are so poorly off that *we* have to go out with a begging bowl. In short, there is so much lee-way still to be made up, we have to make up in dead earnest for lost time or lost opportunities, that—while not ignoring the good work that is being done in India today in science and industry—it is only fair to accept the position, however unpalatable it

may be to us, that we have to learn a great deal more still. On the strictly political and economic fields, too, we have our own peculiar problems. Reaction pulls one side, the fateful Red lure on the other.

It is thus obvious that it must be by other means—neither material nor political, but other means if at all—it must be through the use of other powers if any—that India will pay her debt to the world. But she has first to forge these powers herself—or reclaim them from the past and perfect them—she must first save herself by her own unblemished ardours and relentless self-discipline, before she can try to salvage or advance civilization.

Now, what exactly is wrong with civilization? The other day I spent a few hours in the vast "Dome of Discovery" in the South Bank Exhibition. It was a visual encyclopaedia of modern science and technology—predominantly, if not exclusively, the achievement of the West. In London and the other cities of Britain I see how science and technology have almost transformed the landscape and even the life-ways of the people. The Underground in London, the escalator, the Overhead in Liverpool, the power-driven labour-saving appliances without number, the wonders of modern medicine and surgery,—who can fail to admire these? Or who can fail to shudder at the tanks, the explosives, the doodlebugs and the atom bombs? In the arts of life and the arts of death, Western civilization is supreme. Yet, by its very nature, its very efficiency, the instrument it has adroitly fashioned returns boomerang-like to threaten its creator with destruction. It was sad beyond words to see in London and elsewhere the effects of wartime bombing. The memorial tablets in the cathedrals and churches tell a melancholy tale—although they record, too, deeds of sterling heroism. At the very moment of seeming Fulfilment there surges an elemental sadness in our hearts. There is an interesting bit of conversation in Frederic Prokosch's novel, *The Asiatics*. An innocent Asiatic girl asks an American visitor: "What do they do there (in the great cities) if there are no sheep to herd, no fields to plough, nothing to grow, and no animals?" The American answers: "They build houses, ships, motor-cars, roads; they make clothes and books and jewels and little round things that will tell you the time of the day without looking at the Sun." The girl is puzzled more than ever, and shoots the culminating question: "Are they happier than we?" "No; less happy." "Why are they less happy?" "I don't know", answers the American, "but I am convinced that they are less happy." "Darkness at Noon" Koestler's phrase: but how terribly appropriate! It has therefore to be admitted that Western civilization—or civilization as we know it today—is a

failure, a great failure if you will, but none the less a failure, a spiritual and moral ruin. Civilization hasn't rid us of fear, of want, and it hasn't given us real happiness. The next step may be either the reign of Belial as pictured by Aldous Huxley or the unalterable rule of Big Brother as imagined by Orwell,—neither a very pleasing prospect. Why have things gone wrong like this?

The question is whether India, being new to the field,—also, perhaps, on account of her particular or peculiar habits of thought—can point to a new way of life. The old way was to be preoccupied with things, with outer forms, with mechanical processes—with the growth and development of things, forms and processes. But there is growth in consciousness as well, and to this little attention has been paid in the past. It is said that the giant lizards and reptiles of the past perished because their development had been inharmonious. Perhaps such a phenomenon is being witnessed today, the protagonist in this tragic drama being Homo Sapiens. Viscount Samuel, in his Utopian essay entitled *An Unknown Land*, outlines the theory that "just as on the physical side there is an all-pervading ocean of material energy, the ether, so on the psychical side there is an all pervading ocean of mental energy...every kind of mental embodiment exists; from the first impregnation of a growing group of carbon-compound molecules; through the lowest manifestations of life, barely distinguishable from inorganic substances; through unconscious vegetable growths; through the most elementary forms of animal life; on to the higher: finally to the human germplasm, to the half-conscious infant, to the fully conscious and self-conscious man." For thousands of years consciousness would appear to have stopped at the stage of the analytical razor-edged mind or intellect, but the instruments which the human mind can handle have grown enormously in number and potency. With such instruments and processes as have been fashioned, it is possible for a few men in key positions to destroy in a split second the very edifices which science and technology have brought into being. Human consciousness is not now strong enough to control the things, the intricate processes, which now surround it. Thus, blindly or purblindly, we see no other way except to counter arms by more arms and still more arms. Defeat is followed by revenge, and revenge breeds another revenge in the fullness of time. Crime is followed by punishment, which becomes a new crime in the series—and we wonder if this series will not stretch up to the crack of doom. Yet, with the best will in the world, we do not know what else can be done under the circumstances. Stalin is armed, and so Truman

must arm no less. We can only live in the light that we see—faint though it be. So long as we don't—or can't—see any higher or nobler light, we can only act in accordance with the lower knowledge. For, always, to run away from one's duty is cowardly. But can the higher light ever emerge at all? Will it emerge first in India, and then illuminate the entire world?

We saw just now that the power of the human consciousness has remained practically stationary while technological advance has been phenomenal. We have no minds today keener than Plato's or Aristotle's, our rulers are not a whit wiser than an Asoka, an Alfred or an Akbar, our generals are in no way cleverer or more resourceful than an Alexander, a Caesar or a Napoleon. On the other hand, we have many more and far more destructive machines than our forefathers had. It is as though the body expanded indefinitely and put on weight while the supporting legs retained their original slender condition. How is this crisis in human history to be met? "The trouble isn't with the West", says Dr. Ainger in *The Asiatics*; "It isn't with the East. It isn't with the North or the South, or the white or the black. It's with Man. He's had his day....Just look around. The black, the brown, the yellow and the white. They're tired and stale, all of them." Is humanity then irretrievably doomed? Or is there some way out of the mess?

Can we meet the situation as the Erewhonians did, by banning machinery? To a certain extent, Mahatma Gandhi believed that this could—and should—be done. But, of course, Gandhism was more than this. It included the very Christian concept of patient sufferance of evil. Non-violence or pacifism or ahimsa is liable to facile misinterpretations. It must not be forgotten that even Jesus once charged at the money-changers in the temple with seeming fury, and Gandhi himself has declared that it is better to employ violence than embrace cowardice. The key-phrase in Gandhiji's concept of "Ramarajya" was "change of heart"—a revolution in our ways of thinking in terms of you and I, Hindu and Muslim, East and West. Gandhism was thus a noble concept, and in the murky atmosphere of the present-day world, it still retains its brightness and purity.

On the contrary, can we not retain all the advantages which science and technology have given us, and meet the situation by advancing human consciousness itself into a new power for achieving the lasting happiness of mankind? The Gandhian "change of heart" is more or less an ethical technique, and leaves the human mind practically where it is. The need is rather to surpass the present limitations of the analytical egoistic mind. Sri Aurobindo, the great Indian philosopher and Yogi who passed away about

a year ago, posited this splendorous possibility in his Magnum Opus, *The Life Divine*. He felt sure that with the advent of this new power, Supermind, our world of division and dolour and death would be transformed into a new heaven and a new earth, a Golden Age, a Satya Yuga. The adventure of evolution is not ended. Out of inert matter came life; out of life came mind; and the mind in its turn will exceed itself, and achieve fulfilment in the Supermind. Of course, life came out of matter because it was already immersed in it, and so it was with mind; and the principle of Supermind will likewise emerge, not from a vacuum, but from the fount which already secretes it. As Lord Samuel writes in the book referred to above, "never do we find life produced from 'not-life'; always from something already living. And never will you get mind from 'not-mind'. It must be there from the beginning. Mind and matter are coeval. From ambience and ether, both present everywhere and always, the universe is made". But "ambience" is more than what we have come to experience as mind. Writing from a sure basis of personal realization, Sri Aurobindo was able to visualize the emergence of the new power of Supermind—a power already latent in our consciousness—and the probable consequences of such emergence. The main consequence will be the dawn of a new age, in which man will be able really and finally to master his fate.

Sri Aurobindo was a philosopher doubled with a Yogi, a Seer who achieved marvellous poetic utterance, a prophet whose life held within it germs of the fulfilment of the prophecy. He looked forward to a race of supermen inhabiting a transformed earth, and he perfected the yogic or spiritual technique that was to make the transformation, not only possible, but even inevitable. Such is the vision that inspires, the work that sustains, the Ashram at Pondicherry which Sri Aurobindo and his associate who is now known as the Mother established over a quarter of a century ago. One thing is certain: only a spiritual revolution can save humanity and take it to further heights of striving and realization. It may very well be that the efflorescence of this new Spring in the history of the human race will be witnessed first in India, soon to extend its potency for life, beauty and joy to the entire world.

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

REVIEW

The Problem of Power: by Lord Radcliffe. Publishers: Secker and Warburg.

Ours is essentially an age of disillusionments. The hopes, the ideals and the doctrines which were trumpeted forth in the preceding centuries and whose accomplishment entailed some of the fiercest struggles and cataclysmic upheavals, seem to have turned to ashes in the mouth like the Dead Sea apples. Today phrases such as 'freedom', 'liberty', 'rule of law' seem as Lord Radcliffe says, more incantations than ideas. John Stuart Mill's noble words in which he defined liberty have the familiar ring of otiose platitudes for us and dissolve like false dreams when submitted to the scrutiny of a searching analysis based on a deeper reasoning.

But, what a thrill of joy and the promise of a new utopia must they have given to an age bearing wearily the yoke of despotic kings and religious pontiffs and struggling to breathe in a freer air! "Liberty of consciousness, thought, and opinion; of expression, taste or pursuit; of association and combination." He lists them all and then goes on: "No society in which these liberties are not on the whole respected is free, whatever may be its form of government and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified. The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily or mental or spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest." An inspired utterance, no doubt. A civilisation that deprives the individual of these liberties seals for itself the well-springs of progress and is foredoomed to crash by its own weight. But to swing to the other extreme is also to bring about chaos and the disruption of all social order. Is it possible, we ask, in this world of interdependence, for anyone to pursue his own good without in any way colliding with others? And can we not pose the question

in the manner of Pontius Pilate, But what is good? Mill does not give any satisfying answer to this question and the world knows too well to what horrible limits human selfishness can go if there is free business competition without any governmental interference, and non-regulation of conditions of labour, manufacturing or the like. *Laissez-faire* led to the frightful conditions of the working class in England where sometimes the miners could not see the light of the day for months together. Dickens's 'Oliver Twist' and Charles Lamb's 'The Chimney Sweepers' make our hair stand on end. But to-day the climate of politics favours the totalitarian regimes where everything is regulated by the State machinery and a perfect society, well-organised and disciplined is aimed at at the very heavy cost of the liberty of the individual. The Juggernaut of destiny seems to be wheeling relentlessly in that direction and Lord Radcliffe rightly points out: "This is an age haunted by disillusion and fear, though that is not necessarily to our discredit. The disillusion comes by inheritance and represents the accumulated disappointment of five centuries, that the modern world which seemed to offer so much to the individual yet continues to withhold its best fruit from his grasp. Certainly it has brought him great benefits but peace of spirit is not among them. If one assumes that our age began with the cult of the individual, critical, independent, and self-reliant, it looks as if it may end with the virtual destruction of all that makes for individuality."

In 1949 Bertrand Russell delivered the Reith lectures (subsequently published as 'Authority and Individual' reviewed in the *Advent*, February 1950) in the course of which he showed how in the complicated framework of the modern State the individual has no voice and counts for nothing even in the local affairs. Russell says, everywhere the feeling prevails: "Oh, if I could ever reach the chief!" Men have left themselves to the mercy of those handful of people who have managed to occupy the key-positions and they are completely disinterested in what happens around them. They know they can have no hand in shaping the course of events. Russell, great thinker in the realm of abstractions, has revealed a rare power of practical thinking by suggesting concrete steps which can recover to the individual a sense of self-importance, self-reliance and responsibility. 'The Problem of Power' is a complementary book. Lord Radcliffe does not put forth any suggestions, he only surveys in a masterly sweep all the phases through which political theory has passed in Europe. He examines all these theories and leaves us at the point where Lord Russell begins.

Central authority, he holds, is indispensable in 'modern society and its crowded civilisations'. So the philosophy of the backwoods, 'that goes to bed with the thought that the less authority men have over each other the better for all concerned, for then each man's virtue will see him through, is useless and too simple for the present age."

Lord Radcliffe, true to his English heritage, does not indulge in sweeping generalisations, extreme statements, unbalanced judgments. He discards such wry traditions as: "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The truth in this tradition is undeniable and Pandit Nehru also in his 'Glimpses of World History' repeatedly says, 'the lust for power grows with use,' but this is not the whole truth. Lord Radcliffe tries to show in the course of these seven lectures that, Power ennobles also, puts men sometimes on their mettle. History offers numberless instances of men who used it without abusing it and discharged their responsibilities in a spirit of selfless sacrifice and devotion. The problem that he treats, boils down to this: "What really prevents men who have authority from abusing their authority?" The other side of that problem is another question: "What is it if it is not force, that leads men to give obedience to authority?" He casts a backward glance and starts from a consideration of Plato's Republic. A backward glance on Plato is sure to prove profitable because as G. L. Dickinson observes: 'The whole world is rocking under our feet, as was the world of Greece when Plato flourished....Everything is now being questioned, right and wrong, religion, philosophy, marriage, property, government. So was it also in the Greece of Plato."

Plato's first great contribution is that he set himself to uproot the crop of doctrines that grow out of a scepticism whose only aim is to destroy values. Plato with his keen intellect tore to pieces such philosophies as hold: "There is no such thing as justice in a State; it is merely a fiction that men, who are conscious of their individual weakness, think up to keep the wild men down. Or it is a word that the people in power use in order to give a moral cover to what is really their own material interest. Or again, as Nietzsche argued, the only thing that deserves to be called justice is the will of the strong man: all else is 'slave-morality.'

Plato was a supreme idealist and, 'To him human life had no meaning unless its purpose was to understand and then to pursue what was True and Good and Beautiful. To the question: 'what do men organize themselves into society for? his answer was: 'To give the members of society, all the members, the best chance of realising their best selves." This at once lends

a great moral purpose to the State. Plato had seen the application of the dogma 'All men are created by nature equal' resulting in the tragic death of his *guru* and so he believed strongly in the rule by caste and his ruling class enjoyed absolute power, unfettered by law. It was to be a communist State and Lord Radcliffe rightly observes: "One pauses a little horrified at this plan of a communism that was to extend to wives as well as property." Lord Radcliffe points out three grievous defects from which Plato's Republic suffers.

Firstly, "It leaves no political function to be discharged by the governed" imposing upon them a sort of slavery. Secondly, "It is, in the highest degree intellectualist. One is left, even at the end, without any impression as to what its people were going to do in the perfect State."

Thirdly he makes, "his rulers ascetics and their rule a puritan order. He would turn poets out of his city, for fear that their enchanting songs should beguile men from the truth." It folds rather frigidly round the human being known to us. 'Your chilly stars I can forgo. This warm kind world is all I know' will be the human answer.

The second talk is devoted to a consideration of the idea of State authority as it developed in the Middle Ages when every theory concerning politics rested on some stray text of the Bible. The king though not responsible to any Parliament yet could not step beyond the Divine Precepts. He was considered as anointed of the Lord and so his authority was unquestionable.

The third talk entitled, 'The Fairy Story of Natural Rights' brings us into the rationalism of the 17th century, when Locke and Hobbes dominated the stage. Man the thinker recovers his lost estate and stands upright determined to question everything that will not fit in with his logic of experienced fact. The theory of 'Social Contract' bit deep into the political structure of 18th and 19th centuries. A beautiful passage of Pascal sums up the grandeur and arrogance of this new attitude which runs: "Thought makes the essence of man; one cannot think of him without it....Man is nothing but a reed, the weakest in all nature but he is a reed that thinks. It needs no universe in arms to wipe him out: a mist, a drop of water, can finish him. Well, if the universe should wipe him out, still man would be nobler than his destroyer, for while he knows his death as he dies, the universe is not even conscious of its triumph over him. All human dignity, then, lies in thought....Let us try to think aright, for right thinking is the basis of morality." A new phase of political theory starts. Seeds are sown of the secular State, the Machiavellian craft of diplomacy, and the morality

which prided in crimes if done for the sake of the nation but which would send to gallows an individual if he committed them for his own ends. This narrow morality still persists with the Nations of Europe and is the cause of world-wide discord. The Mother once said in Her New Year's Message, "The world will enjoy a living and lasting peace only when men understand that they must be truthful even in their international dealings." Lord Radcliffe exposes the vagueness of the concept of Natural Rights which varies with the outlook of its makers. The farce of the majority rule as government by consent of the governed is also brought to clear light.

The fourth talk gives a historical perspective of the American Constitution. This constitution is perhaps the greatest contribution to the problem of unifying large countries in such a manner that the diversities which enrich the life of the nation with various trends and cultural outflowerings are not flattened out into uniformity. The ideal of human unity also bids fair to materialise on the lines of a federal world-State. The fifth talk narrates the story of the industrious men who were the builders of the British Empire in India. It is difficult to strike the balance on this question because we are yet scarcely out of the thick of the struggle whose memory not unoften stands in the way of a correct assessment. Lord Radcliffe tries to prove that some of these men were actuated only by the desire to promote the happiness of the ruled.

The sixth talk, 'The Individual and the State', examines the theories of Rousseau, especially the one that the individual must sumbit to the general will. The tyranny of the majority is now a patent fact and there is no answer to the objection that a hundred fools cannot make a wise man. How masses of men are swayed by hysteric passions and turn a deaf ear to the voice of sanity is amply borne out by the manner in which elections are conducted in the democratic countries. T. H. Green foresaw the situation when he remarked: "As the will of the people in any other sense than the measure of what the people will tolerate is really unascertainable in the great nations of Europe, the way is prepared for the sophistries of modern political management, for manipulating electoral bodies, for influencing electoral bodies and for securing plebiscites."

The last talk "Power, and the Problem of its Control" brings us to the crux of the problem. Some political thinkers like Jouvenel have come to look upon power as an entity having a life and existence independent of its possessors, 'as if it were some terrible, remorseless god with laws that determine both the nature of his own being and the fate of

men who fall nto his hand.' Lord Radcliffe brushes this view aside as a sort of superstition. But if we probe deeper into the nature of forces that govern human life we will discover a deep truth in Jouvenel's words. The fact is that when power comes in the hands of egoistic and ambitious persons they at once open themselves to the influence of dark occult forces and become their instruments. The fact that others do not fall victims to these forces does not disprove their existence. All men are not goaded by the self-aggrandising ambition. These dark forces have been known as Asuras since times immemorial.

Lord Radcliffe does not dogmatise anywhere. The State to him is an organ of our collective best self or our national right reason and the motto of all authority and all power in the words of Bishop Wilson should be: "Firstly, never go against the best light you have; secondly take care that your light be not darkness."

This motto contains, if properly read, the seeds of a new age in which the conflict between the individual and the society will be resolved by the discovery of the best light hidden in man. We base our vision of the future on the complete discovery of this light leading mankind out of all darkness. The nation is an organism but each individual human being is not a mere cell in it whose identity can be completely merged in the larger being.

As Sri Aurobindo says: "For these social units or aggregates are not like the human body in which the component cells are capable of no separate life apart from the aggregate." The individual is, "the more and more distinct and luminous Person, the increasing God." The justification of Society lies in creating such conditions as will help the individual in the discovery of that inner truth of his being which is one with the truth of the universe. The hope of the future lies in a spiritual religion of humanity.

"By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite. Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system, one in mental creed and vital form. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one; that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring

about a kingdom of the divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realization by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realization by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its perfection and permanent happiness be founded." (*The Ideal of Human Unity.*)

R. N. KHANNA

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